Commentary

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Gorbachev's Russia: Breakdown or Crackdown?
Richard Pipes

Eastern Europe: Is Olof Palme the Wave of the Future?
Angelo M. Codevilla

Death With Dignity & the Sanctity of Life
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The Sad Story of the Boy Wonder
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Rap and Racism
Terry Teachout

Books in Review: Hilton Kramer on T.S. Eliot's Anti-Semitism
John J. DiIulio, Jr./Todd L. Newmark/
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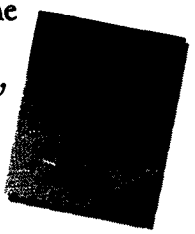

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VOLUME 89 NUMBER THREE *MARCH 1990*

Articles 13 Gorbachev's Russia: Breakdown or Crackdown? *Richard Pipes*

26 Is Olof Palme the Wave of the Future? *Angelo M. Codevilla*

33 Death With Dignity & the Sanctity of Life *Leon R. Kass*

44 The Sad Story of the Boy Wonder *Joseph Epstein*

52 Interpreting the Bible *Robert Alter*

Observations 60 Rap and Racism *Terry Teachout*

Letters 2 from *Steven E. Plaut, Daniel Pipes, Monty Noam Penkower, Ophra Yerushalmi, Samuel Lipman, LeAnn J. Davis, Charlotte Low Allen, David Novak, David Singer, Ian R. Macneil,* and others

Books in Review 63 T. S. Eliot and Prejudice, by Christopher Ricks' *Hilton Kramer*

66 Private Prisons, by Charles H. Logan *John J. DiIulio, Jr.*

68 Vietnam Now, by John LeBoutillier *Todd L. Newmark*

70 Toward a Jewish Theology of Liberation, by Marc H. Ellis *Richard L. Rubenstein*

71 Microcosm, by George Gilder *George Russell*

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Letters from Readers

Israel's Options

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

While I agree with its conclusions vis-à-vis American foreign policy, Daniel Pipes's excellent article ["Is the West Bank a Vital American Interest?," November 1989] is in large measure an analysis of internal Israeli politics, and as such is—I believe—somewhat misleading.

Mr. Pipes describes the Israeli electoral spectrum as composed of two central "blocs" of roughly equal size, each offering radically different strategic approaches to the West Bank and Gaza and to the ultimate issue of conflict-resolution. Together with the small Right and Left fringes, the role of the two central blocs is to create mutual paralysis and to prevent any national consensus on negotiations and conflict settlement. The media, both in Israel and abroad, generally abide by a similar reading of events.

I find such a view highly misleading for a number of reasons, but in particular because it understates the breadth of national consensus in Israel and overstates the substantial differences among Israeli parties on issues of ultimate conflict-resolution. This is perhaps natural given the overheated rhetoric and Byzantine style of political vendettas that characterize Israeli interparty relations, extending to the strident denunciation of one another's peace proposals and positions.

Any examination of the positions of the two major Israeli bodies should be attempted only after taking ten steps back and a deep breath. The broad similarity in fundamental positions of Labor, Likud, and some other groups is remarkable, all the more so given the acrimonious (one might say the Mediterranean) tone and style of partisan debate in Israel.

The "bottom line" of all these proposals is for the creation of a functional separation between Israel's defense/security boundaries and its civilian/administrative boundaries. Israel would retain military control and supervision over the territories while Arabs would govern themselves in most civilian affairs in one way or another. Slogans of "let's keep" vs. "let's give up" the territories notwithstanding, the above formula is a fair summary of the basic substance of the Allon plan, the Begin autonomy plan, the Jordanian option, and even some versions of proposals for an aptly constrained Palestinian state.

Endorsement of some version of this fundamental strategy characterizes nearly all parts of the Israeli electoral spectrum, even parts of the Right and Left fringes, to each of whom Mr. Pipes rather generously attributes 10 percent of the public.

There are, of course, differences among the various proposals and plans on specific questions: whose flag is to fly, the fate of Jewish settlements, the role of Jordan, water and ecological issues, etc. Yet the political importance of all these differences pales when placed against the background of near-consensus on the basic concept of functional separation. The media also tend to be overly obsessed with these differences.

The near consensus in Israel on basics runs up against the stone wall of Arab intransigence; the Arab world exhibits near-consensus in endorsing the alternative approach of Israel's dismemberment in stages. The very reason for the Arab rejection of functional separation as the basis for a solution is that such a solution is intended to *resolve* the conflict and result in accommodation with Israel, rather than in its destruction.

The lack of appreciation of the depth of Israeli consensus is perhaps a consequence of media distortion. The strength of the far Left in Israeli politics, the Left that rejects functional separation, that is composed primarily of Arabs but also of some Jewish "intellectuals," naïfs, and Marxists, is even more exaggerated and overreported than that of left wings in other societies. This, together with the hyperbole that typifies political discourse in Israel, creates the false impression that there exists a real Israeli constituency behind alternatives to functional separation.

STEVEN E. PLAUT
University of Haifa
Haifa, Israel

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

When Daniel Pipes describes a Jordanian solution as unrealistic because the State Department wor-

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ries that such a solution might "further destabilize that country by increasing the size of the Palestinian majority," he touches on, but does not explore, an immense submerged issue in the whole dilemma.

The Palestinians of the West Bank and the Palestinian majority in Jordan are not simply political relatives, they are blood kindred, culturally identical and identifiably separate from the Hashemites who rule. Even though the State Department shudders and columnists denounce the thesis that Jordan *is* Palestine, it is a demographic and ethnic fact. What that fact would seem to mean is that any line-drawing which separates Palestinian from Palestinian will, in the end, be a source of bitterness and trouble. . . .

Isn't the underlying problem the artificial nature of Jordan's political structure? If Jordan were seen to be Palestine, with power shared between ruler and ruled, the rationale for a tiny, angry Palestinian state on the West Bank would be diminished, possibly removed. And although such a state would have sharp boundary quarrels with Israel, those quarrels would be subject to settlement by diplomacy or conflict as between normal states. The poison of the cry for a "homeland" would have been drawn.

Support for Hussein, "a guy you can talk to," is essentially sentimental. . . . It is doubtful, however, that Palestinians share this attitude. They remember very well how Hussein solved his own *intifada*, which was put down with a brutal severity that would make Meir Kahane's prescriptions a cooing of doves by comparison. Memories are very long in that part of the world and it may be folly to try to construct a policy which does not take those memories and ambitions into consideration.

I wish Daniel Pipes had explored that aspect of the tangle. Perhaps if the nature of Jordan were altered to accommodate Palestinian national ambitions, a Jordanian solution might make sense after all.

SAUL DAVID
Van Nuys, California

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In his article, Daniel Pipes outlines the negative consequences of each of the four major Israeli approaches to the immediate problems of Judea and Samaria in the context of the continuing Arab war against Israel. However, he is too quick to dismiss what he calls the far Right solution, i.e., the only action that has any chance of ultimately forcing an end to the Arab war against Israel. I mean the expulsion of the Arabs from the land of Israel.

First, can anyone believe that any government of Israel will ever allow a hostile Arab military force west of the Jordan river? This means effective Israeli military control of Judea and Samaria forever, regardless of political arrangements.

Second, whatever the legitimate national rights of the Palestinian Arabs are—and those rights do not include the killing of Jews or the destruction of Israel either quickly or in stages—can anyone believe that those rights can be realized in a land under someone else's effective military control forever? Arabs are entitled to be ruled by an Arab government no less than are Jews by a Jewish government. This second point means that all autonomy schemes are manifest nonsense. They can satisfy no one, except perhaps the foolish diplomats who invent them. We have no need for more demilitarized Rhinelands, Polish corridors, or free cities of Danzig.

Third, can anyone believe that any Israeli government can agree to making even the smallest part of . . . Israel *judenrein* forever? Nonetheless, such policies, which can only be called Nazi, have been and remain central to the Arab position. No Jew should ever agree to such ideas: not anywhere in the world, and especially not in Israel.

The negative consequences of such an expulsion are clearly stated by Mr. Pipes. They include increased communal strife within Israel, a break in relations with Egypt, the alienation of the Left-liberal part of American Jewry, and loss of significant American support. That is the price of the survival of Israel. Besides, most of those losses are inevitable anyway. . . .

ALEXANDER FIRESTONE
Ames, Iowa

DANIEL PIPES writes:

Steven E. Plaut is right to remind us of the basic consensus in Israel, as he is right in speaking of that country's overheated political climate. But his point—that most Israelis agree to separate their coun-

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try's defense boundaries from its administrative ones—wrongly reduces the very different political visions of Labor and Likud to their lowest common denominator. True, the parties do agree on a fair amount (which explains how they have worked together in a unity government for six years), but this does not justify ignoring their many differences.

Saul David promotes the Jordan-is-Palestine idea, recently renamed the "Jordanian solution" (to distinguish it from the "Jordanian option" long promoted by Israel's Labor party). Adam Garfinkle and I have already published in COMMENTARY ("Is Jordan Palestine?," October 1988) a lengthy response to this line of reasoning and I will do no more here than recapitulate its main arguments:

(1) Through much if not most of history, the region known as Palestine did not include the lands now in Jordan. (2) While the British Mandate for Palestine originally did include today's Jordan, it did so for reasons of imperial convenience that have no bearing on today's politics. (3) Despite its small size, the Jordan River has long constituted a significant geographical and human dividing line. (4) While Palestinian and Jordanian leaders alike have proclaimed that Jordan is Palestine, they have done so not as disinterested observers but as politicians seeking to protect themselves or dominate each other. (5) Even though Jordan may have a predominantly Palestinian population, this no more makes it Palestine than the many Cubans in Miami make that city part of Cuba. Finally, (6) there is no reason for Israelis to help destroy what has historically been the most cooperative Arab regime in favor of their most persistent enemies.

Alexander Firestone argues for "the expulsion of the Arabs from the land of Israel" on the grounds that most of the dire consequences of this act—civil strife in Israel, plummeting relations with the outside world, the alienation of world Jewry—"are inevitable anyway." But there is no reason to accept his assumption that Israel's domestic life and foreign relations will so drastically decline. Despite current travails, Israel's place in the world is more solid today than ever in the past, an accomplishment that Mr. Firestone's policy would needlessly jeopardize.

Sidney Hook

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Sidney Hook's fascinating interview with Norman Podhoretz, "On Being a Jew" [October 1989], raises an important issue that deserves comment.

Both in his autobiography, *Out of Step* (1987), and in his interview . . ., Sidney Hook confessed his error at having long denied the national aspirations of but one persecuted people—his own. It was the Holocaust and the rebirth of the state of Israel which proved to be watersheds in his acceptance of Zionism, though with a particular emphasis. In linking these two events he arrived at the same position held by many Israeli Jews also until the Six-Day War—namely, that only the Zionist commonwealth allowed its citizens to build a life of dignity as Jews, . . . in sharp contrast to the docile resignation of past generations.

Sidney Hook's harsh evaluation of the lack of Jewish resistance during the Holocaust is made clear in his autobiography. Thus, challenging Albert Einstein's pacifism concerning atomic weaponry in 1952, he wrote:

> When I think of how many millions of Jews permitted themselves to be slaughtered in what was in effect a passive resistance to evil, I find myself wishing that they had died like the Jews in the Warsaw Ghetto. It sounds smug and hollow to say that when one must die in any event, one should do it nobly.

And again, when opposing the argument of Bertrand Russell *et al.* that fighting the Soviet regime would result in a nuclear war which would destroy all life and civilization, he could not resist yet another criticism of some of the participants in the Holocaust—no, not of the murderers, but of the victims. Thus Sidney Hook, the secular philosopher who spent the war years in the safety of an American university, saw fit to measure and compare the varying actions of those who uniquely suffered at the hands of the Nazis:

> The cost of submission to tyranny is also high, even if one discounts the likelihood of a nuclear conflict between the Soviet Union and Communist China after the West capitulates. Six million Jews went to their deaths submissively without humanizing their tormentors. The Jews who went down fighting in the Warsaw Ghetto, in a desperate resistance, died more nobly.

Upon reading these passages last summer, I wrote to Sidney Hook, pointing out that any knowledge of the complexities of the Holocaust would militate against such invidious comparisons and patronizing judgments. I noted that scholars of the last two decades have analyzed the difficulties in the way of Jewish armed resistance: an understandable inability to believe in unprecedented mass murder; starvation and disease; limited access to weapons; Western apathy; the anti-Semitic environment; the heavy price of collective responsibility. Remarkably, armed resistance did take place in several ghettos and even death centers. But perhaps most impressive were the diverse forms of spiritual resistance by the Jewish masses against Nazi efforts at dehumanizing them prior to murder. Examples include the smuggling of food into the ghetto, the organization of ghetto classes, cultural and religious observances, the keeping of documentary records for the sake of posterity, etc. Given such activities, I concluded my letter by saying that we should reconsider our definitions of terms like "resistance" and "nobility." Alas, my letter was returned with one word on the envelope: "deceased." . . .

MONTY NOAM PENKOWER
Touro College
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In his interview with Norman Podhoretz, Sidney Hook very briefly defined a Jew. COMMENTARY readers might be interested in a more detailed analysis. The following excerpts are from Sidney Hook's article, "Reflections on the Jewish Question," *Partisan Review*, May 1949:

> . . . Nothing is so absurd as the attempt to find some trait, or combination of traits, which will explain the usage of the term "Jew" or which marks off Jews from non-Jews. Whether it be religion, history, culture, language, or political aspiration, every criterion breaks down in the face of the multiplicity of facts concerning the beliefs and behavior of those who call themselves Jews or are called such by others.
>
> Religion, for example, is not a differentiating factor. Those who subscribe to a particular form of Jewish religion still regard those in

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the Jewish community who reject this form—or any form of religion—as Jews. What is even more to the point, the non-Jewish community does not regard religion as a differentiating factor. It does not distinguish between religious and irreligious Jews, or believe that "Jewishness" is washed away in the waters of baptism. . . .

What is true for religion is true for any other trait of differentiation—physical appearance, psychology, culture, language, political faith. . . .

Paradoxical as it may sound, the only formal definition of a Jew that can be given which will do justice to the various ways in which the term "Jew" is used is this: *"A Jew is anyone who for any reason calls himself such or is called such in any community whose practices take note of the distinction. . . ."* [Emphasis in original]

One may quarrel with the adequacy of the definition but not with the facts which suggest it. There is no trait or dogma or practice common to all Jews who recognize themselves as such or who are recognized as such by others. What they have in common is a condition or situation of exclusion from one or another pattern of social life, an exclusion which ranges from minor annoying restrictions in good historical weather to major discriminations in bad. What unifies them is nothing positive but, by and large, a common historical condition which, whether they like it or not or whether they like each other or not, cancels out in the eyes of others their not inconsiderable differences.

WILLIAM ISAACS
Bronx, New York

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . I am convinced that had Sidney Hook lived for just a few more years he would have devoted his enormous intellectuals efforts and talents more than he had done earlier to the needs and aspirations of the Jewish people and the state of Israel. One senses this from his autobiography and particularly from his colloquy with Norman Podhoretz. It is too bad that he and so many other Jewish intellectuals with great minds wasted many of their early years worshipping false idols and seeking a false messiah. . . . As one "Hookist" once told me: "Thank God we didn't succeed in our original program!"

As a great admirer of Sidney Hook, I attended many of his lectures . . . during the 1960's and 70's. I remember well his debate with Rabbi Leo Jung, when in all sincerity he declared: ". . . if there is a God, I would like to meet Him. I have a great many grievances I would like to discuss!" . . .

The United States, indeed the entire world, has been diminished by the loss of Sidney Hook, winner of the Freedom Medal and courageous son of the Jewish people. . . . Perhaps he is even now having his discussion with the Creator. . . .

IRVING GAVRIN
Bedminister, New Jersey

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Joseph Epstein's "Remembering Sidney Hook" [November 1989] put me in mind of an encounter I had with Sidney Hook in the mid-40's when he was a professor at New York University and I, a young man fresh out of Chicago, my native city, was leading a discussion group on the "Great Books" at NYU's School of General Education. . . . On the evening scheduled for class discussion of the Bill of Rights, Sidney Hook strode into the classroom, introduced himself briefly to me, and proceeded to take over the whole hour with an uninterrupted preachment on freedom in the U.S. vs. the Soviet Union.

I listened with amazement at this unexpected, unscheduled performance. Sidney Hook struck me as a man with a mission, a biblical prophet more obsessed with righteousness than with protocol. One would have to have lived in the 30's to recognize the passions that governed him. . . .

More than forty years later, I watched him in action once more, this time on a television broadcast of William F. Buckley's *Firing Line*. Buckley had been twitting him about his hard-nosed view of God, and of heaven and hell. "What if after you have passed on you meet God and He asks why you failed to believe?" Buckley asked. Sidney Hook fired back, "I'd ask Him where the evidence was.". . .

CHARLES ANSELL
Sherman Oaks, California

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Joseph Epstein's "Remembering Sidney Hook" was right on target for me. . . . After leaving the intellectual prison of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism in 1965, I began to read Sidney Hook. . . . His books, articles, and essays helped lead me . . . into the light of democratic thought.

Mr. Epstein's recounting of the role played by Hook's wife Ann reminded me of a memorable day in Arizona when I had the great pleasure of driving the two of them around the mountains north of Scottsdale. Sidney Hook was telling me about a discussion he had had with Harry Truman regarding the Soviets, and he kept referring to the President as "Harry." Throughout the narrative, Ann Hook kept interrupting with the words "Sidney, Sidney, Sidney," just as Mr. Epstein describes. When the story was over Mrs. Hook said: "Sidney—at least refer to him as President Harry."

I cherish the hours that I was fortunate enough to spend with a real guru and his wife.

PHILLIP ABBOTT LUCE
Reston, Virginia

The Piano

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

The end of the novel, the end of history, the end of the world. Now Samuel Lipman gives us another apocalypse—the end of the piano ["Does the Piano Have a Future?," December 1989]. Why the piano and not other instruments? Why not the whole of music? Because Mr. Lipman is reviewing two books on the piano. So be it. But then why does he explicitly exempt opera from his doomsday broodings? By one of his own central criteria, is the composition of opera more flourishing today? Or is he saying that it is *Einstein on the Beach* or *Nixon in China* that "go via the ears and minds of listeners to their hearts"? Well, that is a matter of taste.

One wonders whence Mr. Lipman's nostalgia for bygone times. Where was that rosy age when, ostensibly, composers, performers, and audiences all shared in common a vibrant musical experience? Surely he knows better than most that almost all the great composers from Mozart down through the 19th century complained bitterly about the lack of receptivity to their music. And remember Schumann's *"Marche des Davidsbündler contre les Philistins"*?

But to return to the imperiled piano. Mr. Lipman bemoans the fact that today's pianist can be no more than an antiquarian or an

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imitator. Alfred Brendel, a living pianist (whom the music historian David Dubal, we are informed, doesn't like), has given the essential reply in a credo that is surely shared by most of us: "I have never considered myself to be the passive recipient of the composer's commands, preferring to promote his cause of my own free will and in my own way" (*Musical Thoughts and Afterthoughts*).

I could easily agree with Mr. Lipman that this is an arid time in terms of piano composition. All the more reason to be grateful to today's pianists for tenaciously evoking the glorious music of the past and reaffirming its everlasting value. This music lives today as much as ever, and only because it is continually recreated. No matter how many times we have heard Beethoven's Ninth, Leonard Bernstein's recent performance of it in East Berlin was a new revelation of the capacity of the past to speak to the present. At the end of a year in which the utterly unpredicted changes in the world have stunned us all, we should be wary of all forms of prognostication, even on the future of music and the piano.

OPHRA YERUSHALMI
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

At the end of an otherwise very informative and interesting article, Samuel Lipman makes what I consider an unduly pessimistic assessment of the future of the piano. He bases this on (1) the current absence of great pianists in comparison with those of the past; (2) the current absence of new piano music that would inspire the performer to original interpretations rather than, as now, to what he calls imitations of previous performers of music already written; and (3) our current inability to create great music, after hundreds of years of being capable of doing so.

The first two pronouncements are, at best, debatable: Murray Perahia, as one example, is, in my opinion and in that of my cognoscenti friends and acquaintances, as good as some pianists of the past. Secondly, are today's young pianists really just imitators? I don't think so. And if some of them are, their style and expression often differ from one another, even as did those of the old pianists whom they allegedly "imitate."

It is the third pronouncement of Mr. Lipman's which irked me the

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most, however, and which I found to be totally untrue (as well as unrealistic): while it is true that there are no Beethovens, Mozarts, or Chopins *now*, we can still hear their great works, and, what is more, beautifully performed. We can, thus, repeatedly experience great emotional fulfillment and pleasure, just as if they were alive today. Thousands upon thousands appreciate and enjoy Michelangelo's genius through his art today no less for not having (regrettably) a living Michelangelo with us now. In the same way, increasing thousands (at least in the San Francisco Bay area) of music lovers go to concerts to listen to excellent (and sometimes great) pianists today, their emotional satisfaction not for even a moment being spoiled by the realization that a future Mozart is not being born right now.

Finally, where does Samuel Lipman get the idea that there is some kind of a law of nature that great art must necessarily be continuously reborn? I believe great art, in the form of great paintings, sculpture, or music, should be enjoyed whether or not it is renewable. I am glad Mr. Lipman ends his otherwise excellent article by stating that for him and for others like him it will be hard to stop playing "the beloved old piano."

EDWARD Y. SOOMIL
Palo Alto, California

SAMUEL LIPMAN writes:

To Ophra Yerushalmi: Why was I concerned with the state of the piano, rather than that of other instruments, or of the voice? Because, as I explained in my article, the piano stands for, and sums up, the great flowering of music in the 19th century. As for the relation in the last century of composers, performers, and audience, Ophra Yerushalmi might want to look, just for a start, at Mendelssohn in London, Liszt in Weimar, Brahms in Vienna, and Wagner in Bayreuth. I am glad that she shares Alfred Brendel's "credo," but surely the critic—and even the listener—must address not the credo, but the results. As to Leonard Bernstein's piggybacking of political developments in Eastern Europe, I would venture that these great events, no matter how epochal they might be, do not make him one whit better as a Beethoven conductor.

To Edward Y. Soomil: Calling Murray Perahia "as good as some pianists of the past" strikes me as faint praise indeed. I do not share Mr. Soomil's confidence in the quality of the musical experience audiences now undergo; it seems to me that the goal of the experience of art properly involves vastly more than what Mr. Soomil first calls "emotional fulfillment and pleasure" and then later "emotional satisfaction." I have never believed that art "must" be "continuously reborn"; I only brought the news that in the case of the piano, and in the wider case of serious music, it isn't being reborn now.

Housework

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In her review of Arnie Hochschild's *The Second Shift* [Books in Review, November 1989], Charlotte Low Allen does men a great disservice by constraining them to a stereotype of slovenly imbeciles incapable of cooking a good meal or understanding what makes a home attractive. Men have traditionally dominated both the art of cuisine (how many world-class chefs are female?) and that of interior design. Why are men capable—even brilliant—at such tasks in the professional arena but dunderheads when it comes to doing them around the house?

Mrs. Allen's argument rests on the assumption that not only do women actually *enjoy* housework, they in fact have been born with some gene which gives them, and them alone, the "hand and heart to make a house a home." Not all women are gifted at homemaking, any more than all men are domestic imbeciles. Furthermore, asking a man to share in housework does not require forcing him to "learn to love scrubbing the tub"—women certainly don't. It simply requests of him that he sigh, as women have done for hundreds of years, and plunge his hands into the muck of a job he doesn't particularly like because it is one of the responsibilities that comes along with maintaining the home in which he has the luxury to live. Mrs. Hochschild's agenda is not, as Mrs. Allen claims, "to force men . . . to do the housework of women." It is to ask men to take a portion of responsibility for the housework of a home.

If men really care so little about the amenities of a home, as Mrs. Allen asserts, why are women bothering to wash the sheets and scrub the kitchen floor? Simply for their own satisfaction? I think not. Most men . . . would much prefer living in a clean home . . . eating real meals (not ones "out of a can") and sleeping on clean sheets (not ones that smell like last year's socks).

No gene, much less a gender-specific one, exists for attention to cleanliness or cooking ability. Rather, little girls are taught, from the earliest age, to pay attention to such things as where dirt collects and how to remove it, and how to separate an egg or boil a chicken. Little boys rarely have had such things pointed out to them—those who have, like my own father (who for years took care of the cooking and housework for his ill mother after his father died), *do* notice when the tub gets dirty, and are more than able to cook meals other than spaghetti with garlic-and-basil sauce. We should certainly not sneer, as Mrs. Allen says *The Second Shift* does, at the value of a homemade apple pie—but pie is no less valuable to the life of a family if Daddy makes it.

Homemaking is a career no less worthy than any other, and any woman who chooses it as her life's work ought to be able to do so with pride. Men, however, have always been allowed their choice of careers. Why should a woman's be assigned to her simply because of her gender? Giving tax breaks to "women who cannot afford to abandon their full-time jobs" entirely disregards the existence of women who, in fact, *enjoy* working full-time outside the home and wish to continue to do so. The fact is that men with working wives who share an equal hand in domestic duties are *not* "acting like women around the house," but rather lending their talents to a partnership, and sharing the responsibilities of creating and maintaining a home.

LEANN J. DAVIS
Malden, Massachusetts

CHARLOTTE LOW ALLEN writes:

I never said that women enjoy doing housework (I'd just as soon not scrub out the bathtub myself, but fortunately it doesn't take very long). What both sexes do enjoy, loath as they may be to admit it in these androgyny-fancying days, is the playing of masculine and feminine roles, around the house as elsewhere. Even Escoffier maintained that he preferred his wife's cooking to his own.

The "some gene" that gives

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women and women alone the "hand and heart" that makes a house a home seems to be strung somewhere along the double-X chromosome, along with the gene for silk dresses and dangling earrings. Survey the pad of a bachelor male friend. It will resemble either a monk's cell, austere and tidy, or a one-man homeless shelter. A single woman's living quarters, by contrast, will almost invariably be cozy and inviting. Men marry because they long for homes, and men who have any sense appreciate beyond words the special gift that women have for providing them. It's something men can't do.

The converse of this is that a husband and wife are not just roommates, and homemaking is not just a bunch of unpleasant chores to be split down the middle. Thus, the home is the wife's natural domain, not the husband's. This may seem unfair to sexual egalitarians, but, as last summer's New York *Times* poll indicated, most women don't mind the arrangement, which plays to their interests and confirms their femininity—as long as they are not made to feel like drudges by overwork or by societal attitudes that denigrate homemaking and motherhood. It beats me how or why Mrs. Hochschild can, on the one hand, describe so compellingly the exhaustion and dissatisfaction mothers of young children feel now that we have pushed them out of their homes and into the work force, and on the other hand blithely assert that this unbearable situation is actually an improvement over the past (or would be, if only men would change, or we had more day care, or something).

Most wives simply want their husbands to be duly grateful to them, not to act like tyrants and to lend a hand when necessary. And husbands will gladly pitch in (even cook and clean!) so long as the task is not presented as an exercise in androgyny—that is, as a threat to their masculinity. One fact of Arlie Hochschild's study to which I neglected to call attention in my review was that the old-fashioned, patriarch-style husbands she surveyed tended to help out their wives more around the house than the post-feminist egalitarians who claimed to regard homemaking as a "partnership," the way Miss Davis does.

Lastly, I couldn't, I just couldn't teach a son of mine how to separate an egg. If he wanted to learn, I guess he would have to read a book or apprentice himself to a master chef. I would hope that, instead of pestering me in the kitchen, he would be off doing manly things with his father, like taking the car apart. As for boiling a chicken—what an awful thing to do to a chicken.

Interfaith Dialogue

To the Editor of Commentary:

In his otherwise laudatory review of my recent book, *Jewish-Christian Dialogue: A Jewish Justification* [Books in Review, November 1989], David Singer faults me for paying relatively little attention to Zionism and Israel in my philosophical and theological argument.

My reason for that seeming inattention is my belief that in the context of Jewish-Christian dialogue, Zionism and Israel are issues calling for more attention from the Christian partners than from the Jewish partners. Indeed, this can be seen in the most extensive Christian view of Judaism in recent years, the ongoing work of Paul van Buren, *A Theology of the Jewish-Christian Reality*. For Christians must come to terms with Zionism and Israel within the context of their overall relationship with Jews and Judaism. Jews, however, must come to terms with Zionism and Israel within the context of their overall relationship with fellow Jews and their own Jewish tradition. Hence, the presentation of a new Jewish view of Christianity was hardly the place, it seemed to me, to engage in a sustained reflection on that essentially inter-Jewish issue. But I do hope to attend to it in my future work.

Nevertheless, anti-Zionism cannot ever be allowed to be any kind of basis for a renewed Jewish-Christian relationship. That is why readers of my book will note that I reject the dialogical relationship between the Jewish theologian, Franz Rosenzweig, and the Christian theologian, Eugen Rosenstock, as being paradigmatic then or now precisely because it was

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based, to a certain extent, on their mutual anti-Zionism.

DAVID NOVAK
Department of Religious Studies
University of Virginia
Charlottesville, Virginia

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

David Singer tells us that David Novak "allows little if any place for a concern with Zionism and Israel as part of the agenda of dialogue." The . . . omission of Zionism and Israel from Jewish-Christian discussions will be enthusiastically welcomed by liberal Christians, Catholics and Protestants, who are hostile to the Israeli state. If I were a Jew who was considering dialogue with Christians, I would insist that the first item on the agenda must be a statement by the Christians of their position on the issues of a Palestinian state on the West Bank and of American support for Israel. I would require such a stipulation because many Christians are afflicted with a feverish attraction to radical leftist causes and movements which, deliberately or incidentally, are anti-Semitic.

[Reverend] ROLAND THORWALDSEN
St. Stephen's Parish
Beaumont, California

DAVID SINGER writes:

The Reverend Roland Thorwaldsen is right on target and David Novak would do well to contemplate his words. As the make-or-break issue for contemporary Jews, the state of Israel must find a central place in the dialogue process.

Harvard Law School

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In his article, "The Campus: 'An Island of Repression in a Sea of Freedom'" [September 1989], Chester E. Finn, Jr. mentions my run-in—as a visiting professor at the Harvard Law School in the spring of 1989—with the Harvard Women's Law Association (HWLA). Here is a more detailed account of that incident.

Socratic teachers demanding attendance, preparation, promptness, and class participation win few popularity contests in American law schools. Especially at Harvard Law School the advocates of such professionalism have largely either long since died, retired, fled, or hunkered down into quiet safety. As a visitor I therefore hardly expected a very warm welcome in my contracts class. I was right. On the other hand, I certainly never anticipated a vehement accusation of "repeated instances of sexism" in my casebook and in classroom discussions. I was wrong. Came the Ides of March, and such an accusation arrived from Bonnie Savage, the chair of the Harvard Women's Law Association.

Typical examples of my alleged sexism were the following:

1. A quotation from Byron's *Don Juan* appearing in a casebook section entitled "Jockeying for Position: The Battle of the Forms":

> A little still she strove, and much repented,
> And whispering, "I will ne'er consent,"—consented.

The citation was said not only to reveal "inappropriate and sexist attitudes," but also to exemplify "the attitude that 'women mean yes when they say no,' thereby promoting a dangerous misperception which has come under fierce attack, particularly in the evolution of rape law."

2. A footnote containing an alleged "comparison of exchange relations to 'any mutually successful making of love.'" This, it was asserted, "uses inappropriate sexual imagery and reduces the sexual relation to a commercial exchange."

3. A remark to a female student: "I don't want to beat you into submission or anything." This allegedly evoked "a male power structure to silence a woman's voice."

4. Making "flippant, disparaging remarks . . . about the possibility that [particular examples of gender-specific] language might be sexist." For example, "Sauce for the goose, sauce for the gander—I don't know, is that sexist?"

These are not allegations of discrimination or harassment, which is what sexism means to most people. They are attacks on the alleged expression of views unsatisfactory to *some* women. In short, HWLA's aim was entirely to stifle thought and expression it did not like.

Anyone unfamiliar with the American university scene might not realize just how intimidating such a letter is and is intended to be—especially when copies are sent to five top administrators, starting with the dean. HWLA's expressed goal was to prevent Harvard from making me an offer of a permanent appointment. I very much doubt if Harvard ever intended doing that. But if it had, I am quite sure that the very making of such charges would have rapidly changed its mind, not out of principle, but out of a desire to avoid controversy.

Even for someone not concerned about his professional security, the intimidation is intense. Teaching is a stressful profession at best. These days conscientious teachers are under constant stress trying to maintain effective student-teacher relations in the face of various forms of near-paranoia. The buzzword is "sensitivity." The price of peace is unfailing avoidance of any of countless ways of saying things—ways which sometimes change from day to day—to avoid distracting from one's educational goals by offending racial, ethnic, religious, and sexual sensitivities.

After the Savage letter I found myself more distracted than ever from what I was trying to teach. There was one case, for instance, involving a male lawyer who had started off representing both parties to a real-estate transaction. Later, in violation of his ethical obligations, the lawyer threatened one of the parties with stringent enforcement of the contract. I referred to him as having switched from being a Big Brother to trying to batter the clients and then caught myself. "Oh, my God, brother—battered women!" It took five minutes before I really got my mind back to the subject again.

This kind of political pressure also intimidates the teacher by the incredible amount of time and psychic energy it can absorb. Surrender is what the HWLA undoubtedly expected and wanted, but even a *mea culpa* expressed sufficiently seriously to pass for the real thing would have resulted in great losses of time and energy.

Fighting back involved an even greater sacrifice of time—carefully drafted eight-page detailed responses to such charges do not come quickly or easily. More importantly, for a permanent member of the faculty that would be just the beginning. If the political activists are not satisfied they will continue to hector the victim for an indefinite period, years if necessary.

My response to the HWLA started by noting that I had been convicted of an offense without a hearing, indeed without even knowing that I had been charged; that the conviction was based on statements of unnamed informers; and that punishment had already been administered in the form of libel. All

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very unseemly for people training to be lawyers.

I then treated each charge in detail:

1. Far from being inexplicable, the Don Juan couplet is in fact a perfect summary of what happens in the Battle of Forms, where parties make contracts with contradictory forms. In that struggle each party strives to make contracts on his own terms, says that he is not making a contract on the other's terms, and just as firmly goes ahead and makes a deal knowing that the other is insisting on contradictory terms. In other words, each side consents while whispering that he will ne'er consent. . . .

2. With respect to exchange relations and love, I first quoted the whole offending footnote:

> The sharp notion that my goals equal your costs is a discrete-transaction concept. In relational patterns my goals may equal your goals and my costs your costs; while exchange takes place, it is in such circumstances muted psychologically in that it is not thought of by participants as a discrete exchange. Consider, for example, any mutually successful making of love.

This footnote in fact conveys precisely the opposite message from that of reducing "the sexual relation to a commercial exchange" and was so intended, as any attentive student in the class would have known.

3. As for the "sexist-language" charge, I pointed out that I make remarks such as "I don't want to beat you into submission or anything" quite often to students of *both* sexes. I do so whenever it appears that under the pressure of questioning, they are beginning to agree with me when they really do not. Far from evoking "a male power structure to silence a woman's voice," these statements are an acknowledgment of having already exercised too much "teacher power to silence a student's voice," be that student male or female.

I also rejected the implication that it is possible ever totally to avoid "using sexist language." In fact it is impossible to speak English as it is normally spoken without regularly using words which zealots would insist are sexist. (Recently a male colleague referred, seriously, to the metaphor, "hitting a home run," as sexist.) If I were to stop my students—male and female—every time one of them used a possibly gender-specific word to express an idea or identify a non-gender-specific person or subject, the class would come to a grinding halt.

4. Humor: the jokes about gender-specific language juxtaposed to a non-gender idea were jokes about the difficulties of using everyday English to do everything everyone wants to do with it. My reason for interjecting the jokes—apart from whatever humor they contain—is to call attention to those inadequacies. One would have thought feminists would have applauded rather than complained. Moreover, the joking reflected genuine puzzlement. *Is* sauce for the goose, sauce for the gander, offensive to anyone? . . .

Throughout I noted the dangers HWLA's zealotry poses for academic freedom, my greatest concern. For example, let us suppose that I did believe that the sexual relation was in fact—and properly so—like a commercial exchange? Teachers and students are entitled to express such views without fear. Who is the Harvard Women's Law Association to decide that those views cannot be expressed? Who made them the prison guards of intellectual liberty?

In summarizing my response, I pointed out that the whole attack reeked of McCarthyism: One Simple Truth; the McCarthyites are its sole interpreters; humor is blasphemy; nonbelievers must either convert to that Truth or be rooted out.

As the charges and their manner of being made were of great import both to my class and to Harvard Law School institutionally, I sent copies of my reply to each of my students and to all members of the faculty. This obviously shocked the HWLA, whose chair whined in the press about *my* "going public." It was an ironic complaint for a political-action organization to make—made more so when I refrained from speaking to reporters, while Bonnie Savage made a regular practice of doing so.

HWLA neither responded to nor even acknowledged receipt of my detailed reply. Nor did it withdraw its charges. Simple public reiteration was its mode of procedure.

Administration and faculty response was of particular interest, given the very serious issues of academic freedom that were involved. Quite a number of faculty colleagues made private supportive gestures. A number of female staff members and both male and female students let me know that they considered the HWLA charges utter nonsense. The vice-dean offered administration "help" several times—surely in an effort to smooth the waters rather than to face the issues. One faculty member used the HWLA letter and my response in his constitutional law class as a vehicle for exploring free-speech issues.

No one at Harvard Law School or Harvard University recognized publicly the dangers to academic freedom of the politicized classroom that the Women's Law Association seeks to impose on faculty and students alike. No one—except for a very few of my students, bless them—complained publicly about the way HWLA had proceeded. All this was disappointing, but not surprising. The vast majority of faculty and students want simply to get on with scholarship and learning. The most common response on American campuses in general, and Harvard University in particular, to those who would destroy academic freedom is, at best, apathy and avoidance, and, at worst, cowering appeasement.

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Gorbachev's Russia: Breakdown or Crackdown?

Richard Pipes

To say that we live in the midst of a worldwide political earthquake is to state the obvious. Democracy and capitalism, which "progressive" Western opinion had relegated to the archives, are everywhere toppling Communist (as well as right-wing) dictatorships with astonishing ease. The secular trend toward enhanced state authority and collectivism that was initiated by the Russian Revolution and accelerated by the Depression, began quietly to be reversed a decade ago in Great Britain and the United States. The elections of Margaret Thatcher in 1979 and of Ronald Reagan the year after appear in retrospect as historic watersheds, signaling a return to the traditions of genuine liberalism. The English and American electorates, increasingly made up of descendants of the lower classes who had benefited from capitalist prosperity to ascend into the middle class, had grown impatient with the burden of supporting the less productive elements of society. In the words of the late Theodore H. White, they had decided "that the costs of equality had come to crush the promise of opportunity." The radical intelligentsia, which in its quest for political influence had played on class resentments, suddenly found the ranks of its followers thinning.

A process similar in effect although different in origin occurred in countries under Communist rule. It began in Poland in 1980 with the formation of Solidarity, the first genuine trade union to gain a foothold under Communism. Solidarity derived much of its strength from the fact that it embodied Polish religious and national aspirations: it was *par excellence* a movement of national resistance against domination by a foreign power ruling through a quisling government. But it also reflected a growing impatience on the part of Poland's working population with a regime that not only robbed it of every political and economic right, but required it to support a huge, unproductive bureaucracy. Solidarity espoused the very ideals that left-wing intellectuals in the West labeled neoconservative: its heroes were Thatcher and Reagan.

Richard Pipes, Baird Professor of History at Harvard, served in 1981-82 at the National Security Council as Director, East European and Soviet Affairs. His history of the Russian Revolution is scheduled for publication by Knopf next fall.

Solidarity's influence quickly spread to Soviet Lithuania, Byelorussia, and the Ukraine, sending tremors through the ranks of the Communist *nomenklatura*.[1] Moscow was alarmed that, notwithstanding the safeguards which it had installed to prevent such an occurrence, a spontaneous worker movement was able to emerge in a regime closely patterned on its own. It ordered Solidarity suppressed, but the more perceptive Soviet leaders realized that the problem would not be solved by arrests and martial law. In the early 1980's some Soviet publications began to warn that Communist governments which had lost touch with the masses faced a precarious future. The dread of a Polish-style social upheaval, combined with the realization that Communist economies were falling behind not only in comparison with the industrial democracies but even with their own past record, impelled the Soviet leadership reluctantly to accept the inevitability of reform. One cannot insist too strongly that *perestroika* and *glasnost* are neither the result of a change of heart on the part of the Soviet leadership, nor the fulfillment of one man's vision, but the desperate effort by an apparatus composed of millions of parasitic Communist functionaries to stave off revolution.

The 18th century ended in 1789, with the fall of the Bastille. The 19th may be said to have ended in August 1914. The one date terminated the reign of absolute monarchs and aristocracies; the other, the hegemony of the bourgeoisie. It is not improbable that historians of the future will date the end of the 20th century with the year 1980 when processes were set in motion that reversed the domination of bureaucracies and arrested mankind's march toward totalitarianism.

Western "progressive" opinion had for years misread the trend of events. It assumed that the world was inexorably moving toward collectivism and egalitarianism,

[1] The proletariat of all countries never united as did its Communist masters. How strong is the kinship among the world's *nomenklaturas* may be seen from the fact that in 1981, when Beijing and Moscow were sharply at odds, the Chinese Communist leadership applauded the crushing of Solidarity. Gorbachev's Politburo returned the courtesy by averting its eyes from the Tienanmen Square massacre.

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and their corollaries, increased state control over social and economic life. Its theorists viewed the differences between the democratic and Communist regimes as differences of degree, not of kind, and expected the two ultimately to "converge." This analysis was psychologically reinforced by the fear of nuclear war which biased perceptions to make the Soviet Union appear stable and relatively benign. The policy recommendations which flowed from these premises called for accommodation.

The "dovish" policy toward the USSR rested on a sequence of related propositions which can be summarized as follows: (1) Communist regimes may leave a great deal to be desired in terms of individual freedoms and living standards, but they compensate for these shortcomings with a more equitable distribution of wealth and superior social services (education, medical help, etc.).[2] (2) As a result, they enjoy popular support and it is futile to pursue policies "premised on the imminent collapse of the Soviet empire."[3] (3) A combination of authoritarian institutions and Russian nationalism makes the Soviet Union immune to external pressures. Attempts to liberalize it from the outside by political and economic means or even radio broadcasting are both futile and dangerous. "Hard-line" treatment serves only to increase Soviet truculence since the aggressiveness of the USSR is rooted in insecurity instilled by recurrent foreign invasions. The more secure it feels, the more peacefully it behaves. (4) In the age of nuclear weapons, whatever objections one may have to its system of government, it is imperative to come to terms with the USSR: good relations with it must be the paramount objective of U.S. foreign policy. Instead of vainly trying to change Communist societies, the West would do well to attend to its own deficiencies.

A representative if not the most sophisticated example of this line of argument can be found in the ruminations of John Kenneth Galbraith. Having visited the Soviet Union in 1984 as a guest of friendly Soviet institutes, Galbraith returned home reconfirmed in the belief that "much can be learned about one of the basic tendencies of the modern economy and policy" in Russia: he reminded his readers that in one of his books he had "celebrated the similarities between the two systems" and predicted their "convergence":

> That the Soviet economy has made great material progress in recent years . . . is evident both from the statistics . . . and from the general urban scene. . . . One sees it in the appearance of solid well-being of the people on the streets, the close-to-murderous traffic, the incredible exfoliation [*sic*] of apartment houses, and the general aspect of restaurants, theaters, and shops. . . . Partly, the Russian system succeeds because, in contrast with the Western industrial economies, it makes full use of its manpower. . . .[4]

He concluded that although the Soviet system "functions less than perfectly" there was no reason to believe that it was in crisis or in danger of collapse. These remarks were made six months before Gorbachev assumed office and proclaimed his country in a state of acute crisis.

It would be easy but hardly fair to demolish the "liberal" case on the example of such casual and irresponsible remarks. There are better informed representatives of this school, although in the end equally flawed. For the dovish argument always starts with the conclusion (we should come to terms with the Soviet Union) and then works backward to find the suitable premise, depending on the circumstances (the Soviet Union is too much of a threat to challenge, or else it is no threat).

A good example of the serious dovish school is to be found in the writings of Seweryn Bialer of Columbia University. In mid-1981 Bialer published an assessment of the Brezhnev administration in which he waxed enthusiastic about its accomplishments.[5] The Brezhnev era, he wrote, "will probably go down in history as the most successful period of Soviet international and domestic development":

> On the economic front, for the first time in its history the Soviet leadership was able to pursue successfully a policy of guns and butter as well as growth. . . . The Soviet citizen—worker, peasant, and professional—has become accustomed in the Brezhnev period to an uninterrupted upward trend in his well being. . . .

While anticipating in the 1980's a reversal of this putative "upward trend," Bialer had no doubt that the Soviet leadership could handle its difficulties and would do so by strengthening the authoritarian features of the regime, i.e., by repression.

The implications of this assessment for U.S. foreign policy were spelled out by Bialer in an article written jointly with his wife a year-and-a-half later in which the foreign policy of President Reagan was subjected to severe criticism:[6]

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[2] Some less informed observers went so far as to argue that the Communist countries of Eastern Europe enjoyed relative well-being. Thus Paul A. Samuelson in one edition of his widely used textbook laid it down that "it is a vulgar mistake to think that most people in Eastern Europe are miserable": *Economics* (McGraw-Hill, 10th edition, 1976), p. 881. My attention to this *bon mot* has been called by Dan Seligman in *Fortune*, December 18, 1989.

[3] Senator Charles McC. Mathias in *Foreign Affairs*, Summer 1983, p. 1018.

[4] "Reflections: A visit to Russia," *New Yorker*, September 3, 1984, pp. 54, 60, 61. Since "exfoliation" means "stripping" or "separating," it is difficult to know what Galbraith meant unless it was that Soviet buildings crack and peel, which indeed was and is the case.

[5] *Foreign Affairs*, Summer 1981, pp. 522-39.

[6] Seweryn Bialer and Joan Afferica, "Reagan and Russia," *Foreign Affairs*, Winter 1982/83, pp. 249-71.

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> The logic of the Reagan administration's policy is based on one key underlying assumption: that Western policy generally and American policy specifically has the capacity seriously to affect Soviet international behavior principally by exerting influence on internal Soviet developments.

This assumption, in their judgment, was "simply fallacious" and "spawned maximalist and unrealistic objectives":

> The Soviet Union is not now nor will it be during the next decade in the throes of a true systemic crisis, for it boasts enormous unused reserves of political and social stability that suffice to endure the deepest difficulties.

It followed that it was vain to hope that the Soviet leadership could be induced to turn its energies inward, to "domestic priorities." Implied was the notion that Soviet foreign behavior could be moderated only by accords with Moscow.

Events since the accession of Gorbachev have shown each of the assumptions underpinning the "dovish" position to have been wrong. Official Soviet sources now admit that the Brezhnev era, officially designated "the period of stagnation," caused a decline in the already low Soviet living standard. The Soviet Union is declared by its own leaders to be in the throes of a "true systemic crisis." In Moscow's East European protectorates this crisis has led to revolutionary explosions in the course of which Communist dictatorships have been swept from power. Moscow has reacted to its crisis not by strengthening but by relaxing its authoritarian features, turning its energies inward, and assuming a less aggressive foreign stance. While it is impossible to determine to what extent the "hard-line" policies of the Reagan administration contributed to these dramatic developments, it is indisputable that these policies did not lead to the predicted deterioration in East-West relations, let alone to the nuclear holocaust which George Kennan and other proponents of accommodation had repeatedly warned us against.

The intellectuals who espoused such fantastic propositions were neither unintelligent nor uninformed. Why were they so mistaken? The answer is complicated and in this context can only be hinted at. Western intellectuals have always viewed the Bolshevik regime in Russia not on its merits but in terms of their own domestic situations. They used it as a weapon against their domestic political and social order, in accordance with the principle that my enemy's enemy is my friend. Thus the British Labor party, which in the 1920's regularly and with overwhelming majorities rejected the applications of the Communist party for admission, nevertheless adopted its policies, pressuring the British government to grant Soviet Russia diplomatic recognition and extend it economic aid. When the Red Army stood at the gates of Warsaw in 1920, poised to advance on Germany, British Labor threatened a general strike to prevent Britain from coming to the assistance of the Poles. The assumption in British Labor and trade-union circles was that anything that the Tories hated had to be good. Throughout the interwar period, Western liberals showed little interest in the actual conditions in the Soviet Union, which they either idealized or excused with diverse spurious arguments (the legacy of czarism, Western "intervention," etc). They needed a certain kind of Soviet Russia to fight political enemies at home: what it actually was concerned them little. This was not an approach that made for objective assessment.

The situation in this respect in the United States in recent years was no different. American left-wing intellectuals had no love for the Soviet Union, but they positively despised Ronald Reagan and everything he stood for. To discredit his domestic and foreign policies they were driven to invent a Communism that was stabler, more popular, and even more prosperous than the evidence warranted.

Now that events have thoroughly refuted the arguments of the doves, one might expect contrition. Nothing of the kind: they claim to have been vindicated.

Thus Strobe Talbott of *Time* declares, with the same finality with which his magazine crowns Gorbachev "Man of the Decade":

> A new consensus is emerging, that the Soviet threat is not what it used to be. The real point, however, is that it never was. The doves in the Great Debate of the past 40 years were right all along.[7]

Why? Well, according to Talbott it should have been obvious to the hawks that the Soviet system is "such an abomination against basic human aspirations, against human nature itself, that much of what the West called 'Soviet power' was actually Soviet weakness." By adopting this line of reasoning, the British appeasers of the 1930's could have boasted after Germany's surrender in 1945 that they had been right after all, because a system as abominable as Nazism never presented a serious danger to democracy. In view of his latest analysis, one wonders why Talbott had been so exercised by the threat of nuclear war as to become one of the country's most passionate advocates of arms control and the author of two major books on the subject. If the Soviet Union was not a serious threat to world peace, then he surely wasted many years trying to prevent an imaginary danger—unless, that is, he thought that the threat came from the United States.

A different and more modest claim on behalf of the doves comes from the pen of the columnist and ex-editor of the *New Republic*, Michael Kins-

[7] *Time*, January 1, 1990, p. 69.

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ley.[8] Kinsley does not so much claim victory for the doves as deny it to the hawks. The conservatives, he argues, had been wrong in that they based their analyses on the concept of totalitarianism as a system incapable of evolution: "Conservatives, having said the collapse of Communism would not happen, now claim credit for it." The main target of this argument is Jeane J. Kirkpatrick who popularized in the United States the distinction between "authoritarian" and "totalitarian" regimes.[9]

As it happens and as will be pointed out below, the distinction remains valid and has great relevance to the current predicament of Gorbachev and his associates. But it is quite incorrect in any event to assert that this distinction postulates the inability of totalitarianism to change. The difference between the two types is as clear as it is significant: authoritarian states monopolize political power but leave society intact; totalitarian systems not only appropriate all political authority but atomize and destroy society as an organized entity.

Totalitarian governments do have an inherent difficulty in evolving toward something else, in part because of the pervasive police institutions with the help of which they govern, and in part because they control all or most of the nation's economy. Unlike authoritarian regimes, the evolution of which involves essentially the transfer of political power from one hand to many, totalitarian states must also privatize the entire economy and revive or recreate society. This inhibits but it does not preclude their evolution.

It has to be conceded that those of us who distinguish between the two non-democratic types of government underestimated the decay of Communist countries and expected the collapse of totalitarianiam to take longer than has actually turned out to be the case. But no responsible adherent of this school of thought regarded totalitarianism as permanently fixed and immutable. Even its most pessimistic theorist, Jean-François Revel, had no illusions about the ultimate fate of totalitarianism: "It stands to reason," he wrote in 1983,

> that a social system that in three quarters of a century has merely perpetuated its people's shortages of food and medical care is doomed to disappear someday. But in no time to change the near future for us.[10]

In reality, it is the doves, not the hawks, who assumed the stability of Communist regimes. The hard-liners believed that firmness on the part of the West would not only contain but in time fundamentally alter the Communist system: the harder they were, the more confident they felt of democracy's eventual triumph over totalitarianism. President Reagan more than once alluded to this prospect. In a commencement speech at Notre Dame in May 1981 he had this to say:

> The years ahead will be great ones for our country, for the cause of freedom and for the spread of civilization. The West will not contain Communism, it will transcend Communism. We will not bother to denounce it, we'll dismiss it as a sad, bizarre chapter in human history whose last pages are even now being written.

In an address to the English Parliament a year later, in June 1982, launching the "crusade for freedom," which the liberal establishment ridiculed as quixotic, the President spoke as follows:

> In an ironic sense, Karl Marx was right. We are witnessing today a great revolutionary crisis—a crisis where the demands of the economic order are colliding directly with those of the political order. But the crisis is happening not in the free, non-Marxist West, but in the home of Marxism-Leninism, the Soviet Union. . . . What we see here is a political structure that no longer corresponds to its economic base, a society where productive forces are hampered by political ones.

To anyone familiar with Marxist terminology, this analysis spelled collapse. In December 1982 Reagan signed a classified policy document which defined the central objective of U.S. policy toward the Soviet Union as pushing that country in the direction of internal liberalization.

I HOPE it will not be considered immodest if I cite some of my own writings on the subject dating from the pre-Gorbachev era: since I worked for Reagan and was widely regarded as a "super-hawk," they are clearly relevant to the argument. In a book written in 1983, immediately after I left the National Security Council (a section of which was later excerpted in *Foreign Affairs*), I advanced the following propositions:[11]

1. The Soviet Union is in a crisis of such severity that it deserves to be called a "revolutionary situation."

2. The crisis is advantageous to the West because the historical record indicates that changes for the better in Russia's foreign policy are induced by "failures, instability, and fears of col-

[8] "Who Killed Communism?," *New Republic*, December 4, 1989, p. 4.

[9] I say "popularized" rather than originated because, as she is the first to admit, the distinction had been known to historians and political scientists for decades before she published her well-known COMMENTARY essay, "Dictatorships and Double Standards" (November 1979). I thought it so accepted that I used it in 1968 in a freshman textbook, *Western Civilization*. The earliest use of this terminology that I encountered was by the German scholar, Heinz O. Ziegler, in his *Autoritärer oder Totaler Staat* (Tübingen, 1932).

[10] *How Democracies Perish* (Doubleday, 1984), p. 17.

[11] *Survival Is Not Enough* (Simon & Schuster, 1984) and "Can the Soviet Union Reform?," *Foreign Affairs*, Fall 1984, pp. 47-61. The quotations which follow are from the *Foreign Affairs* article.

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lapse" and "not by growing confidence and a sense of security."

3. The Soviet regime must

> find a way of reconciling the interests of the state with the creative energies of its citizens. This cannot be accomplished unless the elite is prepared to sacrifice some of its authority and bring society into partnership, if only of a limited kind.

This objective, in my view, called for enhancing the role of legality, allowing more scope to private enterprise, and decentralizing the administration to give the ethnic minorities greater self-government.

4. "A Soviet Union that will turn its energies inward will of necessity become less militaristic and expansionist." I considered such a development imminent:

> If revolution is set aside because it lacks social support, a return to Stalinism because it is unrealistic, and recourse to war because of its uncertain outcome, reform looms as the only viable way out of the "revolutionary situation" that the Soviet Union faces.[12]

These words, published before Gorbachev took office, meant that reform in the totalitarian Soviet Union was more or less unavoidable.

At the time, these "hard-line" views were regarded as over-optimistic if not positively dangerous. It is a strange experience, therefore, to be castigated today for allegedly having denied the possibility of change in the Soviet Union after having been accused in the past by the same people of playing with fire in a vain effort to change it! Even if one admits that the conservatives, along with everyone else, saw the Communists as more solidly entrenched than they turned out to be, the conservatives at least correctly diagnosed totalitarian regimes to be suffering from an incurable disease. It was their opponents on the Left who insisted that the patient was in good health.

GEORGE KENNAN has pronounced Gorbachev a "miracle."[13] The judgment is consistent with the dovish perception of Communism as so rock-solid that presumably nothing short of divine intervention could alter it. Actually, of course, the Soviet leader did not descend as a *deus ex machina:* he was no more a miracle than the hundreds of thousands of outraged citizens whose demonstrations on the streets of Leipzig, Prague, and Bucharest brought down the Communist dictators there. Gorbachev came to office neither by hereditary right nor by a *coup d'état* but by the choice of the very same Communist elders who had ruled the Soviet Union in the "era of stagnation." His reform program, at least in its initial form, must have had their endorsement. They elevated him to the highest office because they had concluded that the situation in the Communist bloc was sufficiently alarming to require drastic action. Apparently Gorbachev struck them as someone able to solve the crisis without upsetting the system that had produced it. It is therefore more correct to say that Gorbachev is a product of the movement for reform than that he is its instigator.

The Communist crisis has many aspects but it is first and foremost a moral debacle: the sense of failure is all-pervasive and the more intolerable in that the ruling party, staking its reputation on utopian promises, had for decades assured its subjects that they were in the vanguard of human progress. To save itself, the party is now obliged to renounce virtually its entire past. October 1917 still looms as a beacon but almost all Communist policies since Lenin's death in 1924 are being questioned and many have been repudiated. Stalin is denounced as a "totalitarian" ruler (an adjective long discarded by most Western academics as "simplistic"), while the thirty years that followed his death are condemned as "stagnant." Privately, Soviet officials now concede that Stalin—in other words, the Communist party under Stalin's chairmanship—was responsible for the death of 40 million Soviet citizens. How can a regime with such a record justify staying in office? Whom can it convince that it bears no responsibility for these crimes and these failures? Such questions gnaw at the conscience of the current Soviet leadership and account for its irresoluteness: for a regime that no longer believes in itself and its right to rule can hardly chart a course and adhere to it through thick and thin.

It is common knowledge that in its external manifestations the Communist crisis is above all due to the failure of the economy. Declining rates of growth, shortages of consumer goods, technological backwardness, and the concomitant realization that the armed forces—the basis of Soviet claim to great-power status—were becoming ever less competitive, were the main reasons for the sense of urgency that gripped the Communist elite in the early 1980's. A new school of Soviet economists called the leadership's attention to the catastrophic prospects facing the country.

What these prospects were is now being spelled out with unusual frankness. Under *glasnost,* Soviet economists have been revealing how disastrous is the Soviet standard of living and how wildly off the mark were those Western specialists who, relying on falsified Soviet statistical data, rated it as between one-half and one-third of the American.[14] They inform us that measured in terms of per-capita output of goods and services, the Soviet Union occupies a place somewhere between 50th and 60th among the nations of the

[12] *Survival Is Not Enough,* p. 202.

[13] *Newsweek,* December 25, 1989, p. 40.

[14] A. S. Zaichenko in *SShA,* No. 12 (1988), pp. 12-22. The statistics below come from this source.

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world.[15] In 1985, we learn, Soviet citizens consumed less meat than in 1913, the last year of peace under czarism. Soviet housing space turns out to be one-tenth of that of the U.S. Even the vaunted Soviet educational system serves its citizens less well, providing nine years of secondary schooling compared to twelve in the United States, and sending 15 percent of youth to institutions of higher learning compared to 34 percent in the U.S. The only item of consumption in which Soviet citizens excel is hard liquor; in this they lead all others in the world by a wide margin: they quaff 17.4 liters of pure alcohol or 43.5 liters of vodka per person a year, which is five times what their forefathers consumed under czarism.

No less troubling to the regime than these statistics was the apathy of the Soviet citizenry, which had long ago ceased to think of itself as a community with shared interests; the estrangement of youth; and the all-pervasive cynicism which made it impossible to mobilize the people in a system which had traditionally relied on the techniques of mass mobilization. The paradoxical effect of totalitarianism's effort to eliminate private interest on behalf of the collective was to destroy the public spirit of its citizens.

ON ASSUMING office in the spring of 1985, Gorbachev and his associates expected to have a relatively easy time reviving the economy and reinvigorating society. In Gorbachev's own words: "We had initially assumed that basically the task was only to correct certain deformations of the social organism, to perfect the entire system set in place during the preceding decades." The premise turned out to be wrong: before long, Gorbachev now concedes, it proved "necessary radically to alter our entire social edifice, from its economic foundations to the superstructure."[16]

Once they realized the immensity of their problem, the reformers dropped the original slogan "acceleration" (*uskorenie*) in favor of "restructuring" (*perestroika*). The latter entailed reducing the grip of the bureaucracy on the country and concurrently stimulating private initiative in all spheres of national life. Essentially, it meant bringing society into a limited partnership with the ruling elite, making it an active participant in the life of the country without, however, abandoning the command method of political and economic management: a *perestroika* or "restructuring" rather than *stroitel'stvo* or construction.

In sum, the Soviet reformers undertook to transform the Soviet Union from a totalitarian into an authoritarian regime. They seem to have believed that the nation had stored in it a great deal of latent energy that would be released as soon as the shackles restraining and silencing society had been loosened. This belief accounts for the rather reckless manner in which they proceeded to dismantle many of the institutions of the Leninist-Stalinist regime before they were able to replace them.[17]

To the historian of Russia this effort at limited reform is not unfamiliar. On two occasions when czarism faced similar problems (economic backwardness, social apathy, decline in international standing) it attempted to bring society into partnership without surrendering its autocratic prerogatives. This occurred in the 1860's and again in 1904. These attempts were, on the whole, unsuccessful because they failed to accompany the liberalization of the economy and of censorship with commensurate political concessions. They awakened expectations which the proposed reforms could not satisfy: in one case they ended in reaction, in the other in revolution.

There are indications that the Soviet Union is currently hovering between the same alternatives. Even as he is solidifying his personal power, Gorbachev is less and less able to govern effectively. The impression gains ground—it is prevalent in the Soviet Union—that while *perestroika* has done nothing to remedy the country's economic difficulties, it has created an added problem in the shape of a political crisis. Gorbachev himself now speaks of the "sword of Damocles" hanging over the Soviet Union, and accuses those who criticize his reforms for being too slow or too timid of "lighting matches while the Soviet Union is standing in a pool of gasoline."[18] Such alarmist language, of course, serves the purpose of silencing the opposition. But even so, the Soviet Union is indeed in an exceedingly precarious situation. It is evident now that Gorbachev and his associates had vastly underestimated the task facing them: the structure which they had judged essentially sound and in need merely of an overhaul turned out to be rotten from top to bottom. First "acceleration" proved inadequate and had to give way to "restructuring"; now there is doubt as to whether anything solid enough remains of the old edifice to rebuild. The absence of a coherent domestic policy is becoming daily more apparent.

Turning a totalitarian regime into an authoritarian one is proving a far harder thing to do than transforming an authoritarian dictatorship into a democracy. Under Franco, Spaniards had been shut out of politics but they owned the country's wealth and were free to form private

[15] A. S. Zaichenko in *Moskovskie Novosti*, No. 34, August 21, 1988, p. 12.

[16] *Pravda*, No. 330, November 26, 1989, p. 1.

[17] One of Gorbachev's advisers said in private conversation that the Chinese criticized the Russians for trying to change too much too quickly: the Chinese thought it preferable to concentrate on economic reform and leave everything else intact, at least for the time being.

[18] *Pravda*, No. 312, November 8, 1989, p. 2; Gorbachev's interview on the anniversary of the October Revolution, November 7, 1989 in Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, *Daily Report*, No. 200, October 19, 1989.

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associations. When Franco died it was a relatively simple matter for democratic institutions to replace the dictatorship. Similar transitions occurred in Salazar's Portugal and Marcos's Philippines. It is a likely prospect for Chile after Pinochet's anticipated retirement. Gorbachev, however, is discovering that, underneath the ponderous superstructure of the Communist bureaucracy which he is seeking to reduce both in numbers and authority, there looms a vast void. In the Soviet Union, with its 290 million inhabitants, a new society must be created from scratch, for of that which had existed before 1917 not a trace remains. The question whether a totalitarian regime is capable of evolution remains, therefore, still open: the Soviet Union has as yet failed to make such a transition. In the end it may turn out that its alternatives are either collapse or reversion to totalitarianism.

The Soviet leaders are reluctantly concluding that their basic difficulties stem from human attitudes which are far more difficult to alter than institutions. Communist regimes have succeeded brilliantly in repelling all actual and potential challenges to their authority, but they have done so at the price of killing everything that gives life to the political organism: personal initiative, public spirit, trust in the government. Now when the regime calls on the population at large to come to its help, it encounters either indifference or outright hostility. The morale of the Soviet citizenry has been systematically destroyed and help is unavailable to the authorities now that they have concluded they can no longer do everything by themselves.[19]

GORBACHEV'S problem is of a dual nature: in addition to the indifference of the citizenry, he confronts the opposition of the ruling elite which stands the most to lose from his reforms. To break bureaucratic resistance, Gorbachev had resort to two devices: the traditional one of purges, and the innovative one of using the state apparatus as a counterweight to the party.

Over the past five years, he has methodically replaced both civilian and military personnel inherited from the previous administrations with his own, with people who may or may not share his outlook but who owe their careers to him. Nearly all the current members of the Politburo and secretaries of the Central Committee are his appointees. The purges reach deep down into the provincial branches of the party and state apparatus and form the basis of Gorbachev's personal power which shows no signs of weakening despite the failures of the reform program. Gorbachev has pledged to eliminate 40 percent of the country's bureaucracy by 1991; if implemented, such retirements will afford him ample opportunities to be rid of many more opponents.

His boldest stroke, however, was to bring into play the Communist state apparatus which since Lenin's days had been confined to carrying out the party's directives and bearing the blame for whatever went wrong. The creation of a new body, the Congress of People's Deputies, elected on a fairly democratic franchise (two-thirds of the seats chosen by secret ballot, the rest reserved for the party and its organs), and the introduction into the Supreme Soviet of genuine public representatives, had been originally intended as a limited operation. It was to give the population a sense of being involved in the political process, and, at the same time, serve as a lever against the hardliners in the *nomenklatura*. The local Soviets, which Lenin had reduced to impotence within months of taking power in their name, are to be revived as well.

In this instance, too, the reformers underestimated the difficulties. After seventy years of dictatorship, the politically active minority of the population was not about to accept the role of consultant to the one-party regime. The leadership was clearly unprepared for the electoral defeats of its candidates which revealed in stark figures the regime's unpopularity: in many districts official nominees could not obtain the required votes even when they were running unopposed. The shattering of the carefully nurtured myth of popular support is something for which the Communist cadres are not likely to forgive Gorbachev.

Equally unexpected was the dispatch with which the reformed Supreme Soviet assumed legislative functions, once some of its deputies came to look on themselves as representatives of their constituencies. Through the system of guaranteed seats, Gorbachev controls enough votes to have his way whenever he considers the issue to be sufficiently important. But there is no assurance that the new parliamentary bodies will always be accommodating.

Indeed, although the Soviet Union still acknowledges only one lawful party, the caucuses which have emerged in the Congress of People's Deputies in the guise of "groups" or "clubs" have for all practical purposes assumed party functions. The most influential of them is the Inter-Regional Group with some 400 deputies (out of a total of 2,250): it is committed to a democratic platform. The Group resembles the Progressive Bloc formed in 1915 in the Duma, which with its relentless criticism of czarism's conduct of World War I

[19] I have spoken to two U.S. officials who accompanied Marshal Sergei Akhromeev, the ex-Soviet Chief of Staff and Gorbachev's adviser, on a recent tour of U.S. military installations. They agreed that he seemed unimpressed by the equipment but was stunned by the patriotism of the men and women in uniform with whom he conversed. He even suspected that he was the victim of a deception. This gives an idea of the morale of the Soviet armed forces.

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paved the way for the February Revolution. Like the Bloc, the Inter-Regional Group is divided into radical and moderate wings: a victory for the latter was the decision, taken hours before the death of Andrei Sakharov, its titular leader, to call off a general political strike. The hard-line deputies in the Congress have responded with *Rossiia,* a caucus of some 100 members.

Gorbachev has thus created a monster that step by step encroaches on the Communist political monopoly.

To some extent this also holds true of the diverse associations, some 60,000 in number, which had been authorized in yet another effort to infuse life into a moribund Soviet society. For the most part they are politically innocuous (a good many of them are youth organizations devoted to sports and rock music). But in some instances, especially in the non-Russian areas, such associations have become a distinct threat to the status quo. The Democratic Union, which advocates a multiparty system, free trade unions, and the right of the ethnic minorities to secession, is the most prominent example. Others are *Rukh* in the Ukraine, *Sajudis* in Lithuania, and the Pan-Turkic *Birlik,* each of them a nationalist party in all but name. Although frequently harassed and persecuted by the authorities, they manage to carry on and gain in local influence.

The political evolution of the Soviet Union since 1985 has been filled with contradictions which are difficult to unravel. Side by side with the incontrovertible measures of democratization is the concentration of power in the hands of one man. It is by no means clear whether Gorbachev involves the populace in the political process in order to share power with it or merely to use it against his personal rivals. He not only staffs the civil and military administration with followers, but gathers in his hands the reins of formal authority. In December 1988 he assumed the title of President of the Supreme Soviet, which gives him considerably greater prerogatives than were enjoyed by his predecessors, designated Chairmen of the Supreme Soviet Presidium. He is both General Secretary of the party and head of state, which endows him, at least nominally, with immense authority. Sakharov worried greatly that such accumulated power could be used for other than reformist purposes.

The centerpiece of *perestroika,* economic reform, has failed and may be said, for all practical purposes, to have been abandoned. The bold plans to reinstate private property in the means of production were given up because they could not be reconciled with the maintenance of a planned economy and the one-party system. The reconstruction of the free market was indefinitely postponed because it required a fundamental pricing reform which was certain to cause inflation and result in social unrest. The Five-Year Plan for 1991-95, as recently announced, faithfully treads beaten paths. The central institution of the Leninist-Stalinist economy, the State Planning Commission or *Gosplan,* retains its grip on the nation's resources. Promises have been made of major shifts to consumer goods and cooperatives are to be encouraged, but the outlook for the next five years is more of the same.

The situation with consumer goods is becoming insufferable. Staple foods are in short supply, and even when available are shunned because of saturation with pesticides, nitrates, and other chemicals. The press reported not long ago that Soviet cats snubbed sausages produced for human consumption. The main victims are the Soviet poor, defined by the authorities as citizens earning less than 78 rubles a month ($5 at the current free-market rate). Government sources indicate they number 43 million.[20] With such a low income, survival is possible only by shopping in state outlets where prices are kept artificially low by government subsidies. However, the burgeoning cooperative market which *perestroika* encourages siphons off these goods to the private sector, with the result that many Soviet citizens are now living in a condition of permanent undernourishment and not a few pensioners slowly die of malnutrition.

The population's lack of confidence in the national economy is reflected in the drastic fall of Soviet currency on the black market. As recently as the summer of 1988, the ruble, officially pegged at $1.61, sold for 20 U.S. cents. In the past year it suffered a further and precipitous decline. As the government in November 1989 adjusted the exchange rate for foreign tourists and businessmen to 16 cents per ruble, the free market once again overtook it: at present, the ruble fetches 7 cents, which represents a 300-percent devaluation.

Various factors account for the failure of the economic-reform plans. There is the inherent difficulty of grafting private initiative onto a centralized economy. Soviet citizens do not trust the government to honor promises to respect the rights and earnings of cooperative enterprises. But above all there are the vested interests of the party bureaucracy to whom state (i.e., bureaucratic) ownership of the national economy assures an easy and comfortable living; the bureaucracy fears the political consequences of the accumulation of wealth in private hands. The risks to which the Communist diehards expose the country with their sabotage of economic reform plans are incalculable: their triumph over liberal economists

[20] Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, *Daily Report,* No. 235, December 12, 1989. Other sources estimate that the Soviet poor account for 20 percent of the population, or 58 million individuals: *Bundesinstitut für ostwissenschaftliche und internationale studien, Sowjetunion 1988/89* (Munich-Vienna, 1989), pp. 20 and 72 ff. According to A. Levin (*Literaturnaia Gazeta,* No. 49, December 6, 1989, p. 12), such people must spend 85 percent of their income on food and other essentials.

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spells disaster. *Perestroika* aggravates social inequalities in a country where they are poorly tolerated. It also increases unemployment which is supposed not to exist under Communism. There are at present several million jobless in the Soviet Union and officials expect that by the year 2005 they will number between 15 and 16 million.[21] Such inequalities and such unemployment, on top of generally declining living standards, create a situation laden with revolutionary potentialities.

The Soviet leadership seems to have no clear idea how to extricate itself from this predicament. It cannot, of course, openly commit itself to full-scale capitalism, which some of its economic advisers privately confess they would prefer. It speaks of adopting the Swedish Social-Democratic model, which the population at large would find most attractive, but it neither knows how to bring it about nor seems to realize that such a system requires centuries of cultural maturing.[22]

NOTHING has won Gorbachev greater admiration in the West than the policy of *glasnost*, the loosening of the absurd censorship designed to propagate images totally at variance with reality no less than with the private opinions of Soviet citizens. (Censorship has been loosened, not abolished, since its organ, *Glavlit*, continues to operate, although under more liberal guidelines.)[23] This policy caught most experts by surprise, since many if not most of them (myself included) had regarded the imposition on the populace of what Alain Besançon has called "surreality" as essential to the survival of Communist regimes. In time *glasnost* may indeed turn out to have been a fatal mistake: for how can one permit open criticism of the government and yet make it illegal to work for a change in government? The czarist government learned this lesson every time it relaxed censorship.

Yet a certain degree of free speech was unavoidable. The Soviet regime had been assuring its citizens for decades that they lived in the most progressive and prosperous country in the world. If that was the case, why change? To justify *perestroika* it was necessary to tell the truth about the country's desperate condition. Apparently the Communist leaders, once again victimized by their own propaganda, believed that it would be enough to blame the country's ills on Stalin and Brezhnev. They exposed the regime to criticism in the expectation that it would be confined to the implementation of Communism but respect its principles. The criticism was to be constructive: destructive criticism was to be channeled back, into the past.

The leaders were quickly disabused of these expectations. Freedom of opinion, once unleashed, proved exceedingly difficult to keep within approved bounds; it acquired a life of its own and pushed outward, probing the limits of the permissible. Thus questioning of the past inevitably led to questioning of the present. Every exposure of a lie, every breaking of a taboo, opened a breach in the fortress of official mythology through which poured critics ready to assault the next bastion. The censors, confused by vague directives, lost their bearings.

The limits of free speech are continually being tested. On the whole Lenin is still beyond the pale of criticism, although on some occasions he has been assailed for instituting concentration camps and dissolving the popularly-elected Constituent Assembly. But the Nazi-Soviet pact, the Katyn massacre, the murder of the imperial family have all found their way into Soviet media. So has the true condition of Soviet society. Denigrating the current leadership, however, is not tolerated. Gorbachev lost his temper when *Argumenty i Fakty*, the most widely read journal in the Soviet Union, if not indeed the world, with a circulation of over 30 million, published the results of a readers' poll which indicated that not he but Andrei Sakharov was the country's most popular figure. Even so, Gorbachev failed in his attempt to dismiss the editor of the offending journal.

At the end of 1989 there were in the Soviet Union over 300 independent publications, the majority of them of a democratic and pro-Western orientation.

The coexistence of a relatively free press alongside a one-party regime is clearly anomalous. It contributes to the widespread feeling in the country that the present ambiguous situation is not likely to last and will end either in full freedom or no freedom.

GORBACHEV'S personal popularity abroad is due, first and foremost, to his pledges to eliminate the threat of war by reducing military expenditures, cutting down Soviet conventional and nuclear forces, and entering with the West into far-reaching arms-limitation accords. These pledges not only lift the nightmare of nuclear destruction which had been hanging over mankind for the past four decades but offer the prospect of substantial savings in defense appropriations which will significantly benefit the taxpayer as well as social services.

Logic dictates that Gorbachev must make good on these pledges if his reform program is to succeed. Western analysts have progressively raised estimates of Soviet military outlays from 6-7 per-

[21] *Pravda*, No. 304, October 31, 1989, p. 2. This figure does not include those who will lose jobs because of anticipated cuts in defense appropriations.

[22] For a discussion of the Swedish model and Eastern Europe, see "Is Olof Palme the Wave of the Future?," by Angelo M. Codevilla, beginning on p. 26 of this issue.—ED.

[23] According to the head of *Glavlit*, V. Boldyrev, the number of forbidden subjects has been reduced by one-third (*Sowjetunion, 1988/89*, p. 111). This welcome news means that two-thirds of such subjects are still taboo.

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cent of the Gross National Product to double that figure; currently some specialists believe it to be as much as 25 percent.[24] This is a heavy burden which threatens to become insufferable: for the evolution of warfare points to an increasing reliance on costly advanced technology and a deemphasis on manpower which in the USSR comes cheap. It is natural, therefore, for Western public opinion to take Gorbachev's promises at face value—this being an instance of good will buttressed by self-interest.

But here, too, the picture is murky and replete with contradictions. There is the evidence of reduced output of certain categories of weapons, notably tanks, the withdrawal from Afghanistan, and troop reductions in Eastern Europe. Yet there are also many facts that raise doubts about Soviet intentions.

The nuclear build-up goes on. New strategic systems (the SS-24 and SS-25) are being produced and deployed; the "modernization" of the heaviest missile in the Soviet arsenal, the SS-18, is resulting in a new heavy missile in violation of SALT II. The Soviet civil-defense program, designed to provide safe shelters for the *nomenklatura,* is proceeding apace. Two new missile-carrying submarines are in production, along with two new bombers. Work on Soviet missile-defense programs has not stopped. The unilateral Soviet withdrawals from Central Europe, announced with loud fanfare by Gorbachev at the United Nations, are carried out in a puzzling manner: some units are reassigned rather than shipped home and much of the equipment is moved at night, when it cannot be observed by satellites.[25]

There is also continuing Soviet military activity overseas in the form of the construction of naval bases and the payment of subsidies to client states. The Soviet navy is building a major facility at Tartus in Syria which will enable it for the first time to service surface vessels and submarines in the Mediterranean. The port seems to be fully under Soviet control. The Soviet naval base at Cam Ranh Bay in Vietnam is being expanded. Advanced Soviet planes arrive in North Korea and Libya. In Afghanistan military aid, estimated at $250 million a month, helps maintain a quisling regime in power. Then there is the military intervention in Central America: to please Washington, Moscow no longer supplies weapons directly to the Sandinistas and the Salvadoran guerrillas but indirectly, by way of Cuba. And what is the possible rationale in terms of *perestroika* for paying billions to support Castro—money badly needed at home—unless it is to buy valuable military facilities and services? After all, the Cuban dictator is no friend of Gorbachev and publicly scoffs at his reforms.

Congressman Les Aspin, a well-informed and balanced optimist, confesses to confusion about Soviet military initiatives even as he criticizes President Bush for not responding to them more enthusiastically. If one scrutinizes his analyses one has to conclude that his optimism feeds mainly on Soviet promises while his pessimism rests on solid facts: the former on what Moscow says, the latter on what it does.[26]

What can one conclude from this confusing picture? That skepticism of Soviet intentions is not a bad habit instilled by the cold war or by lack of imagination. It is prudent. Until and unless incontrovertible evidence of Soviet cutbacks in military production and foreign engagements is forthcoming, it will be premature to conclude that a new era in international relations has dawned. Those who are ready to embrace the Soviet Union on the basis of its declaration should bear in mind how wrong they were in the past: how Soviet spokesmen have now conceded that Moscow had believed nuclear war to be winnable,[27] that the Soviet government had lied about its defense budget, that its invasion of Afghanistan was not defensive but aggressive, and that the Krasnoyarsk radar indeed violates the ABM treaty. American liberals prefer to see in these admissions evidence of Soviet sincerity; but they really prove the flaws in their own judgment.

THE one subject on which doves and hawks have always agreed is that the nationality question in the Soviet Union is best left alone. Liberals accepted at face value Soviet claims to have solved ethnic rivalries by eliminating their economic causes and conducting intensive indoctrination. Conservatives have traditionally regarded the Russian people as the earliest victims of Communism and our best allies. They would not identify the United States with the aspirations of the national minorities on the grounds that this would push the Russians into Communist arms. As a consequence, the U.S. government, which had pressured Great Britain and the other Western empires to decolonize, has scrupulously respected the territorial integrity of the Soviet empire. Even at the height of the cold

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[24] Anders Åslund in Henry S. Rowen and Charles Wolf, Jr., eds., *The Impoverished Superpower* (Institute for Contemporary Studies, 1989), p. 49.

[25] New York *Times,* August 9, 1989, p. 10.

[26] House Armed Services News Release, November 16, 1989. Military hardware is the only product of Soviet industry that has a foreign market: it is a major hard-currency earner. In some fields—jet combat planes, helicopters, and tanks—exports to the Third World are believed to amount to one-third or more of production: Steven Zaloga in *Armed Forces Journal International,* December 1989, pp. 20-21. Obviously, major cutbacks in the manufacture of this equipment would have serious consequences for Soviet finances, which may explain the reluctance to curtail armament production.

[27] Vadim Zagladin in *Izvestiia,* No. 179, June 27, 1988, p. 3. Zagladin is an important member of the Central Committee of the CPSU. When in 1976, the so-called "Team B" appointed by George Bush, then Director of Central Intelligence, came up with this very same assessment of Soviet strategy, the arms-control community to a man denounced it as the product of "cold war" paranoia. It has not been heard so far to comment on Zagladin's admission.

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war, nothing was said or done that could be interpreted as encouraging nationalist trends there. The Voice of America and Radio Liberty were forbidden even to go as far as Lenin did with his theory of national self-determination and the Soviet constitution with its guarantees of the right of secession. It was a curious case of the Communist party professing more liberal policies than the U.S. government was prepared to demand of it.

Both positions were based on mistaken premises. Soviet policy toward the minorities, far from solving ethnic animosities, has intensified them. The hegemony of Russians in the party apparatus, Moscow's exploitation of natural resources in the republics, Russian migration into these areas with the resultant competition for scarce living space and consumer goods have aggravated ethnic relations. It sufficed for Gorbachev to ease censorship and to allow the formation of voluntary associations for these tensions to rise to the surface.

No less erroneous was the belief that the Russian people were our best allies and that expressing support for the rights of the minorities would alienate them. The Bolshevik party from its inception in 1903 was predominantly Russian in its ethnic composition. In the elections to the Constituent Assembly in November 1917, the bulk of Bolshevik support came from the Russian provinces, and it is here that the Communists had their base during the Civil War. The regime tries to staff 80-90 percent of its officer corps with Russians and Russified Ukrainians, and makes certain they occupy key positions in the party and security apparatus throughout the country. This is not to imply that the Russians have chosen Communism as a way of life: it was imposed on them by force. Indeed they paid the heaviest price for it in human casualties. It is, nevertheless, true that such popular support as the CPSU ever enjoyed came principally from the Russian population, which explains why the regime long ago chose to identify itself with Russian nationalism.

At the same time, there is no evidence that the Russians are deeply attached to their empire or care to rule 140 million colonial subjects. Many of them believe that the minorities are in every respect better off because they derive a disproportionate share of benefits from the all-Union economy. During the recent disturbances in the Baltic republics and Transcaucasia, Moscow made no attempt to exploit Russian nationalism, which is ethnocentric and anti-Communist in the case of the hard-line opposition and tolerant of minority demands in the case of the reformers.

The Russian masses are more placid and fatalistic than the other inhabitants of the USSR and they have been slower to stir. The strongest challenge to the regime so far has come from the borderland areas where anti-Communism blends with hostility to Russian domination. In Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia, it has taken the form of a direct and seemingly uncompromising challenge to the Communist constitution. In Transcaucasia it has been strongest among the Georgians but most violent among the Shiite Azeris whose religious passions, inflamed by agitation from neighboring Iran, find outlets in brutal pogroms against Armenians. It is seething close to the surface in all the republics of the Union, including the Ukraine, whose defection would be fatal to the unity of the Russian empire.

Gorbachev is trying to neutralize nationalist ferment by remaking the pseudo-federal constitution drawn up in the early 1920's by Lenin and Stalin into a genuine confederation. The minorities are promised a greater voice in the allocation of economic resources on their territory as well as an end to linguistic Russification. Parliamentary commissions are said to be at work devising a new and more liberal constitutional arrangement. But the sincerity of these efforts is open to question in view of Gorbachev's public commitment to the preservation of the unity of the Communist party, i.e., its continued control from the Russian center. The chances are that the major ethnic groups will not be satisfied with such concessions and will increasingly insist on full sovereignty. As one Russian intellectual put it, the Soviet Union cannot enter the 21st century carrying the baggage of a colonial empire.

No one had expected Moscow to relax its grip on Eastern Europe. Some of us thought of "Finlandization" of that region as a possibility, but rather a distant one. The recent events there have surpassed the wildest fantasies of any observer of Soviet affairs who was willing to go on record.

The rationale for Moscow's policies in Eastern Europe since 1985 will become known when the relevant documents are made accessible to historians. At present one can only speculate. The most likely explanation is that the Soviet authorities have concluded that the economic and social situation in that area had become potentially so unstable that nothing short of massive Soviet help could prevent an explosion. This help was unavailable: Moscow had no resources to spare in view of its own domestic problems. The alternative was forceful suppression of any unrest, but that would have irrevocably marred Gorbachev's carefully nurtured image as a liberal and man of peace, which he needs in order to qualify for Western aid. The least unpalatable solution was to Finlandize Russia's East European satrapies. This meant self-rule internally and a friendly neutrality in foreign affairs. It was an exceedingly bold initiative, much bolder than any the Gorbachev administration has ventured to take in its

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own country.[28] A revolution was instigated from above to prevent an eruption from below.

Under the arrangement which is still being worked out, the hard-line Communist *nomenklaturas* have been ejected from power, in some instances with Moscow's blessing (Poland and Hungary), in others on its orders (East Germany, Czechoslovakia, and Bulgaria). The manner in which these ruling elites have been toppled and replaced by popular non-Communists leaves little doubt that the process was masterminded by the CPSU. In some cases, Moscow encouraged the entrenched interests to strike deals with the opposition; elsewhere, it looked on benevolently as street crowds forced them to surrender power. The East German, Czechoslovak, and Bulgarian Communist regimes were solidly entrenched and would never have abdicated of their own free will.[29]

The Soviet government seems to count on Western Europe, the United States, and Japan offering the East European countries enough aid to make them viable and stable. Under certain conditions, it appears prepared to withdraw Soviet troops from Eastern Europe, although it seems unlikely to agree to evacuate East Germany since this would deprive it of military leverage in Europe as well as rob it of its most valuable trophy of victory in World War II. It seems equally unlikely to consent to the unification of the two Germanys, except on terms unacceptable to the Federal Republic, namely, neutralization and withdrawal from NATO. All these matters, however, are in flux: it is doubtful whether Gorbachev himself knows his desiderata.

The general delight at the liberation of Europe's Eastern half is understandable. But it is only sensible to warn that once the euphoria has subsided, staggering problems will confront the democratic governments there. Forty years of Communist looting and mismanagement have thoroughly undermined the economies of this area and demoralized its citizenry. The democrats who have taken charge—many of them academics and writers—possess unique experience in fighting tyranny but little if any in administering a state. The Communist apparatus is trying to hold on to what is left of its authority; some of its members must anticipate with glee the collapse of the democracies and their return to power under one guise or another. The KGB and Soviet military intelligence have not withdrawn from Eastern Europe; hundreds of thousands of Red Army occupation troops are still in place.

Under these conditions, it is sensible to offer generous economic aid to Eastern Europe and to negotiate mutual troop withdrawals with the Warsaw Pact. But the situation in this part of the world merits close attention: nothing that has occurred there is irreversible. A sharp move against reform in the Soviet Union could quickly upset the fragile arrangement.

GORBACHEV, hailed abroad as a statesman who has dared to challenge the very fundamentals of the Leninist-Stalinist regime, a liberal and a man of peace, inside the Soviet Union is held in low regard as someone who has failed to make good on his promises and brought the country to the brink of anarchy.

It can hardly be disputed that the Soviet government is losing authority. Of this, there are many indications. Although strikes in the energy sector have been declared illegal, Moscow could do nothing but equivocate and negotiate with the miners of Vorkuta when they struck in October 1989 to protest its failure to honor promises to them. All around the country, demonstrations are taking place daily, many if not most of them unauthorized.[30] On November 7, 1989, the anniversary of the Bolshevik coup, demonstrators carrying anti-Communist banners paraded in Moscow and other cities in front of stony-faced bureaucrats. In several republics, dissidents disrupted official celebrations on that occasion; in Georgia and Armenia they forced the authorities to cancel them. More ominously, the armed forces are encountering open defiance. In certain districts, 10 percent of those called for induction fail to show up. In the Baltic republics and Transcaucasia, draft centers have been blocked by protesters.[31] The Chief of the General Staff has complained that men in uniform are frequently assaulted by hooligans: in 1989, 53 officers lost their lives as a result.[32] The violence in Azerbaijan, in the course of which police stations were raided by fully armed men and local security forces were unable to restore order, has been widely reported in Western media. These are occurrences without precedent in the Soviet Union over the past half century. They are ominous developments for a system whose authority has always rested on force.

With each passing day, the Gorbachev regime

[28] Russia has a historical tradition of granting greater political liberty to its subject peoples than to its own. In the 19th century, a number of areas which it had conquered—Finland, the Baltic region, Poland, the Central Asian principalities of Khiva and Bukhara—were in varying degrees self-governing while the Russian metropolis lived under a strictly autocratic regime.

[29] Rumania is a special case since Moscow had no voice in its internal affairs. Ceaucescu was overthrown by a spectacular popular revolution, stimulated by the example of neighboring Communist countries. Such a revolution could not have succeeded in any other East European state because of the presence of Soviet troops. There, revolutionary change could have taken place only with Moscow's blessing.

[30] According to the Ministry of the Interior, in the first ten months of 1989 there took place in Moscow 324 gatherings with 472,000 participants, of which 209 were unauthorized: *Pravda*, No. 326, November 22, 1989, p. 6. Citing these figures the Ministry's spokesman complained that under *glasnost* and democracy "some people think that everything is permitted."

[31] *Komsomolskaia Pravda*, No. 273, November 28, 1989, p. 4.

[32] Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, *Daily Report*, No. 243, December 22, 1989.

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resembles the ill-fated Provisional Government of 1917 more and more: long on words, short on deeds, uncertain what to do as the structure which it has undertaken to reform collapses all around it. And like Kerensky, Gorbachev enjoys greater popularity abroad than at home.

Gorbachev has taken a number of preventive measures which in the eyes of Russian reformers presage a crackdown. He has organized special Worker Detachments to Support the Police (ROSM). These units, linked to the Ministry of the Interior, are supposed to help fight crime, which is rising at an alarming rate.[33] But fears have been voiced that their true function is to serve the same role as the notorious ZOMO's in Poland in 1981 during the crackdown on Solidarity. Someone has also taken the trouble to establish a hard-line Communist trade union, the United Front of Workers of Russia, which opposes reforms and assails intellectuals as exploiters. The authorities have shown a leniency which occasionally resembles patronage toward the anti-Semitic *Pamiat,* whose more extreme followers spout Nazi slogans. The *Rossiia* faction in the Congress of People's Deputies, ROSM, the United Front of Workers of Russia, and *Pamiat* are instruments available to Gorbachev or his replacement should it be decided to stage a crackdown.

WHETHER the Soviet Union will make a transition to a modern civil society, collapse in revolution and civil war, or, like China, resort to repression cannot be foreseen at this time. The most desirable solution for everyone concerned would be for an orderly, institutionalized transfer of all the authority traditionally claimed by the Communist party to democratically elected institutions. This is what Gorbachev seems to have had in mind in his address to the Central Committee Plenum on February 5, 1990 in which he called for the abolition of the Communist party's monopoly on power, the creation of a presidency (presumably elective), and the introduction of a multiparty system. These revolutionary proposals, if implemented, would undo the political work of Lenin. Can this be accomplished? Gorbachev himself seems unchallengeable: he has accumulated more personal power than any Soviet leader since Stalin. But since he assumed office in 1985 the Communist party—his principal instrument—has lost a great deal of authority and prestige. For this reason, the process of transition may prove beyond his or anyone else's capacity to carry out. The masses support Gorbachev in his struggle against entrenched party interests, but their vision of a new Russia is not necessarily the same as his own. As power slips from the party's hands, politics may become polarized between the forces of reaction and those of anarchy and separatism.

Aware of the incompetence as well as the unpopularity of Communism, Gorbachev is seeking to jettison it in his own country as he has done in Eastern Europe. But it is by no means certain that the Russian empire with its multinational population has the cohesion necessary to make a peaceful transition from totalitarianism. Nor is it clear whether Gorbachev, for all his professions of democracy, would be willing to abide by the will of the nation once his reforms were in place. For it is one thing to invoke the *vox populi* against one's opponents and another to obey it when it goes its own unpredictable way.

[33] According to Soviet sources, 25 percent of the young men inducted into the armed forces have a police record: *Komsomolskaia Pravda,* No. 273, November 28, 1989. p. 6.

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Is Olof Palme the Wave of the Future?

Angelo M. Codevilla

Does the rout of Communism in Eastern Europe, and its apparent loss of nerve in the Soviet Union, also presage the end of non-totalitarian forms of socialism throughout the world, or does it mean, as Mikhail Gorbachev's adviser on German affairs, Nikolai Portugalov, recently proclaimed, that "the tree of socialism is greener than before"?

Two diametrically opposed judgments have filled the world's media. One is that Communism is such a manifest failure that people everywhere will avoid like the plague everything associated with it in any way. The other is that since totalitarianism is incidental to socialism, and was really only an accretion that spoiled and deformed it, a socialism without totalitarian baggage will now conquer the world. On this view, the model for the future is free, prosperous, socialist Sweden (best symbolized, perhaps, by the name of its late Prime Minister Olof Palme).

In certain quarters of Western Europe, reactions to the events in the East have been more complicated. Thus, the socialist President of France, François Mitterrand, sees the crackup of East European Communism as the beginning of the end of a century-long rift in the socialist family. He hopes that this will make "the product" less suspect. But he also worries aloud lest the peoples of Eastern Europe, in their rush to freedom, turn away from "the best that socialism has given them."

Indeed, there is scarcely a socialist in Western Europe who is not apprehensive about hordes of Easterners coming West with loads of horror stories about socialism. Any satisfaction that British Laborites, Italian Socialists, and German Social Democrats may get from hearing Eastern Communist parties (including the one in the Soviet Union) insist that they too are now just plain socialists, is mixed with fear that voters may by the same token now think that the West European Left is after all no different from the Communists. Much of the West European Left is therefore reversing two decades of rapprochement with the ruling parties of the East.

At an October 1989 meeting of the Socialist International in Milan, for example, the West German SPD wanted to bury the embarrassing fact that since 1969 SPD governments, through economic aid, had propped up the regime of the murderous Wall, and that just recently the SPD had touted its special ties with the East German Socialist Unity party (SED), as the Communists there used to call themselves.

In the East itself, the worries of non-Communist socialists are sharper and more immediate. The appeal of the East German feminist writer Christa Wolf is unusual only in its frankness: "We still have a chance to develop . . . a socialist alternative to the Federal Republic. We can still reflect our anti-fascist and humanistic ideals from which we proceeded long ago." But to do any of this, say Wolf and other East German socialists, they must somehow manage to keep East Germany as a preserve for their ways. Wolf and her friends may have disliked Communist "domination." But it appears that they relish open competition even less.

Before considering what basis in reality all these hopes and fears may have, it is essential to cast a brief glance at the proverbial skunk at Europe's garden party: military power.

It is quite incorrect to contend that "no one predicted" the collapse of East European Communism. To be sure, few on the Left did, and even fewer in the various foreign-policy establishments. In their view, the countries of Eastern Europe had "real governments" which inspired much patriotism and which were worthy of being treated as if they represented their peoples, albeit imperfectly. But most conservatives always saw these regimes as nothing more than a bunch of thugs who ruled only by the threat of Soviet guns. If ever the threat were lifted, so went this "unsophisticated" analysis, the regimes would be swept away in a matter of days. And that is exactly what happened.

Whatever Gorbachev's ultimate intentions for Communism were or are, whether from his own

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point of view he calculated well or badly, throughout 1988 and 1989 he gave the impression to the East Europeans that Soviet troops would not shoot to prevent even profound deviations from totalitarianism—so long as their countries remained within the Warsaw Pact. In mid-1989, when the Hungarian government started to tear down the fences along the Austrian border and made it clear that the border police would no longer fire at escapees, Gorbachev did not object. By the beginning of November 1989, when Gorbachev visited East Berlin, crowds chanted his name as a talisman against their own Communist bosses. Within days, as the demonstrations in Leipzig mushroomed from 20,000 to about a half-million—virtually the entire city population—Gorbachev let it be known that he had been on the phone to the commander of the 380,000-strong Soviet forces in East Germany, telling him to keep his troops in the barracks. He allowed the storm to rage.

On the other hand, on December 8, Hans Modrow, the reportedly arch-moderate Prime Minister of East Germany, set a sharp limit to popular sovereignty: "I want to say emphatically that wherever there are weapons it is necessary to understand that there is a limit. . . . Weapons have to be where they belong, and must not fall into the wrong hands." But of course the source of the people's grievances is precisely that the weapons *have been* in the wrong hands for forty years.

In Czechoslovakia, too, on November 29, even as the chastened Communist party was almost unanimously voting in parliament to abolish its own guaranteed "leading role" in society, the country's Defense Minister, General Milan Vaclavik, made a point of declaring that the army "definitely stands to support the General Secretary of the party."

In Hungary, by far the freest country in the East, the Defense Minister nevertheless gave an interview to *Le Monde* on October 24, the gist of which was that the Hungarian army remained a faithful member of the Warsaw Pact.

As for Poland, when its anti-Communist Prime Minister Tadeuz Mazowiecki visited Moscow on November 24, he felt compelled to rededicate his ferociously anti-Soviet country to continued faithful membership in the Warsaw Pact and to apologize to Gorbachev for widespread incidents in which Poles had desecrated Soviet military graves in Poland.

Much as Mazowiecki and others in the region are enjoying unprecedented freedom and a taste of power, they lack any control whatsoever over the means of violence. In Poland, as everywhere else, the armed forces and the police, "the guns," are in the hands of the professionals who for forty years have lived as a caste apart from the rest of society, and who are now more isolated than ever. That caste has material interests that can hardly be taken care of except in socialist systems tied to the Soviet Union.

The upshot is that the overwhelming majority of East Europeans have become powerful petitioners, but they are not yet truly sovereign. Over their heads, now out of sight, now brandished, hangs the threat of violence—either from domestic or from Soviet goons. (U.S. policy tends to perpetuate this by negotiating an arms-control agreement with Moscow that guarantees the presence of Soviet troops in Eastern Europe, and by "supporting Gorbachev" rather than national self-determination.) Hence, the primary political question for the peoples of the region is not simply, "What should we do?" but rather, "How far can we go?" The future of socialism would be much clearer—and almost certainly much less assured—if one could discount coercion.

THE strategy of the Communist leadership in the face of these new developments is obvious. First, jettison as much old baggage as possible. In order to separate both the current leadership *and* socialism itself from the past, change the name of the party. Expel, prosecute, and punish leaders whose boots all party apparatchiks had licked until only yesterday. Repudiate both the violence by which the party held power, and the universal practice of doling out society's wealth to political favorites. All this, of course, is standard operating procedure for Communists. Indeed, every new Communist dictator has begun his reign by "discovering" and repudiating the abuses of his predecessors.

Second, make some kind of deal with any and all "other forces" who may be willing to work for socialism. The objective is, as Hans Modrow has stated, "a market-oriented socialist economy." Modrow explains that he simply cannot allow the possibility of unemployment or of the loss of "social benefits." One may question the sincerity of Modrow's kind concern, but no one can deny that this stratagem too is familiar. Since the end of World War II, Communist parties in Eastern Europe have sought to legitimize their rule by coalescing with "all democratic and peace-loving groups," while reserving to themselves the right to determine which groups did and which did not fit that category.

Third, since "free elections" cannot be avoided, organize them in a way that will minimize the entry into the political system of new people who want to eliminate the whole system of state management of the economy and of culture. The power to pose one question rather than another, and to formulate that question, prejudices the answer. Proportional representation, for example, virtually ensures the existence of many small parties and makes it unlikely that they will agree on any firm course of action. Also, if the voter can cast his ballot only for party lists, power rests

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with those who draw up the lists. All this increases the chances that the Communists will be able to buy, bully, or broker power on the retail level.

Fourth, since some privatization seems inevitable, profit from it. Polish Communists, for example, have begun to convert managerial posts in state enterprises into ownership shares. This, together with the exercise of lending authority in banks, should allow the *nomenklatura* to wield economic power in ways already familiar in the Third World and in China.

The most remarkable thing about this strategy is its *chutzpah*. By what right do people who have impoverished and brutalized their nations now claim *any role at all* in the future? Communist officials in the region have mused that in an open election they would gather "maybe 5 percent" of the vote. Judging by the semi-free elections in the Soviet Union, where a majority scratched out the names of even unopposed Communist candidates, 5 percent may be about right. So what does socialism have going for it other than squatters' rights and the diminishing factor of fear?

SOCIALISM'S greatest immediate asset is that most of the people who have become prominent since the ferment in Eastern Europe began would like to make their countries over in something like the image of Sweden. The program of East Germany's New Forum is very much a socialist program: property would be so conditioned as to be hardly private, and most members of the New Forum seem eager to work with the Communists to perpetuate the GDR as a laboratory where their social vision can be worked out.* In Czechoslovakia, Vaclav Havel, the man whose opposition to Communist dictatorship earned him first jail and now the presidency of his country, is evidently a liberal in the contemporary American sense. Havel and the Civic Forum, of which he is the most prominent leader, have concentrated on pushing for the dismantling of the Communist apparatus, but they have also embraced "liberal" Communists like Alexander Dubcek as partners. In Hungary, the leading figure in the drive for liberalization has been Imre Pozsgay, himself a Communist. In Poland, the Solidarity movement is a broad coalition of trade unionists, socialist dreamers, and Catholic social thinkers. Even though this coalition is mainly united by anti-Communism, in 1988 Solidarity decided to join the Communists in a round-table discussion, and later to join them in the government.

In spite of all this, however, the dynamics of these political arrangements are not working in favor of socialism. In Czechoslovakia the crowd that cheered Alexander Dubcek recoiled at the thought of his becoming president. Dubcek, said one observer, had been a vessel into which people had poured their hopes for a little more elbow room. Now their hopes had become much too big for the vessel. By November a member of the Civic Forum was startled when his son sharply rejected the idea of Dubcek for president with the words: "I don't want any more Communists doing any more things to Czechoslovakia." Another liberal Communist mused that his time had never come: for so many years his ideas had been too risqué, and now, suddenly, they were out of date.

In Hungary, Imre Pozsgay's reformist government scheduled a popular election for president in which Pozsgay would have been the only well-known candidate. But an upstart party, the brazenly anti-socialist Free Democrats collected signatures on a petition whose point was obviously to deny Pozsgay the job. The Free Democrats' only asset in the campaign was that they stood four-square against the past—all of it. They won.

In East Germany in mid-November, no sooner had the Communist Politburo begun to reconstitute itself into a liberal image than the cries of demonstrators in the street changed from "We want to stay" to "Communists out." Another common cry was, "That was just the shirt; we want the pants." By the beginning of December, the streets resounded to cries for immediate reunification and the demise of the socialist state. On December 15, the New York *Times* reported that an epidemic of discrimination had broken out in East Germany against people associated with the regime: a former policeman applying for a job as a truck driver was run over and killed; signs appeared reading, "Help wanted, no members of the SED need apply"; and rocks were thrown through the windows of cars owned even by non-Communist "progressive" writers who had been favored by the regime.

How will the political struggle work out? In an atmosphere substantially free of physical coercion, and with such an obvious demand for leadership that utterly rejects the past forty years, at least some politicians will undoubtedly try to supply it. Anticipating this, already the newest East German Communist leader, Gregor Gysi, is using the time-dishonored tactic for disqualifying anti-socialist politicians—namely, hinting that they may be fascists.

But there is reason to believe that in the East today such tactics will henceforth disqualify those who use them rather than those against whom they are used. In Rumania the Communists who took over when the army deposed and killed the dictator Ceauşescu tried to quell the anti-Communist fervor of the crowds by trucking in paid demonstrators to harass opposition leaders whom they berated as "foreigners." It fooled no one. For while the political scene in Eastern Europe may well be confused, there can be no confusion on one point: the name of the game will be to see who can draw the sharpest distinction between himself and the past.

* In January, however, New Forum split up. The breakaway faction denounced both socialism and those who continue to work for it alongside Communists.

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As for economics, East European Communist officials argue for introducing changes gradually, while maintaining controls on credit, a substantial state-owned sector, and a big social-welfare apparatus because, they contend, the average worker would be hurt by such changes, at least initially, and would protest.

This line of argument deserves more skepticism than it has so far received in the West. After all, no one who has exercised power in Eastern Europe has ever cared very much about discomfiting workers.

But more to the point: what evidence is there for the widespread proposition that the average worker in the East is so brutish and short-sighted as to prefer the assurance of continued, or barely alleviated, misery in exchange for loafing his life away? Is the widespread quip of the East, "They pretend to pay us and we pretend to work," really an expression of satisfaction? Do workers in the East so adore, for example, the guaranteed child care which "allows" 90 percent of mothers to work that they are willing to put up with all that goes along with such guarantees?

If anything, the evidence suggests the contrary. The foremost item is the huge westward flow of migrants. Perhaps a third of a million East Germans went West during the last quarter of 1989. After the Wall and the Iron Curtain were opened, the flow continued at the rate of several thousand per day. The numbers of Poles, Czechs, etc. was much smaller, but presumably because only a few could manage to find a Western country that would let them take a regular job. These immigrants have come to work, not to loaf.

The counterargument is that these live wires are the exceptional ones, and that most of the others like the socialist cocoon. Yet the only polling done so far—unscientific though it be—confirms common sense. Many white-collar workers whose bureaucratic tasks are peculiar to a socialist regime believe that they could not find as comfortable and secure a niche outside the system. Others, including most blue-collar workers, cannot wait to receive what the market, not the regime, thinks their labors are worth.

One is left to wonder at the lowering of socialism's economic claims. Once it boasted that it would provide a prosperous workers' paradise for all. Now the best it can promise is a penurious loafers' paradise for those with pull. Whatever attractions socialism might hold, they are not economic.

What, then, will the economic policies of the new governments be? The official economies are in more than a little danger of collapse, and it is by no means clear that the medicines being applied will help rather than hurt.

Poland's Solidarity government is trying the austere *"old-time religion"* demanded by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) as a condition for a $725-million loan: freeze wages, decontrol prices, and gradually sell or restructure bankrupt state enterprises; meanwhile, keep taxes high to provide a social safety net, not least for the unproductive bureaucracy. This was the IMF's prescription for Mexico. If it works, Poland may succeed in doing as well as Mexico has—not a cheery prospect.

Hungary, in the best Argentinian fashion, has been trying to run state enterprises according to free-market principles, and with foreign loans that amount to $1,760 for every Hungarian man, woman, and child. This is alongside a private sector of small businesses that adds up to 25 percent of the economy. But although the private sector by itself does well, the bulk of the economy is not about to change.

In Yugoslavia the prosperous Slovenian Republic seems to have accomplished the transition to ownership of large industries by their managers, and is freeing small businesses. The Croatians are hastening to catch up, while the Serbians, stuck in the socialist dark ages, find in the growing disparity in wealth one more reason for ethnic resentment.

The East German economy has some state enterprises that do well and others that do not. The same is true of Czechoslovakia. In both places there are calls for privatization (in Czechoslovakia by a longtime Communist economist), but no plans exist.

Thus, while it is clear that even Communists want to move toward free enterprise, it is not clear that they know what they are doing or that they have the will really to break with the past. Moreover, none of the people in charge of these economies has yet faced the fundamental questions of economic life. Are there to be restrictions on new businesses competing with old ones? Will imports be allowed to compete freely with domestic goods? Are foreign currencies to circulate freely? The extent to which these economies remain socialist depends more on the answers to such questions than on formal economic plans.

As Hernando de Soto points out in *The Other Path,* the simple inefficiency of government bureaucracy in enforcing restrictions on the formation of new businesses and on the holding of foreign currency has allowed an informal economic rebirth in parts of Latin America. Something similar may be happening in Eastern Europe. Poland's unofficial currency standard is the U.S. dollar. East Germany's is the Deutschmark. Hungary is experiencing a boom in small business fueled by money from Germans, Austrians, and Italians who are buying property, antiques, and fine handicrafts. Computer-software firms are doing well, too. The secret is not smallness. It is freedom from regulation, and often from taxes. Will the new economic planners fight these trends? If so, regardless of what else they achieve,

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they will discredit socialism even further, if that is possible.

In East Germany, no amount of struggle against economic freedom will suffice so long as East Germans are allowed to take jobs in the West. In taking such jobs East Germans pronounce a judgment on socialism in their country that cannot be appealed unless the border were closed again. It is a measure of their lack of confidence in this, the most testable of the new socialist experiments, that Portugalov, Gysi, and the left wing of the SPD have all demanded that West Germany restrict the right of East Germans to employment in the West.

If a consensus on economic matters is developing in Eastern Europe, it is this: economic freedom and economic prosperity are one and the same thing, and half-measures in the direction of economic freedom well-nigh guarantee failure. Few have as clear a grasp of the fundamentals as did Ludwig Erhard, Konrad Adenauer's Economics Minister in 1947, who turned West Germany from a cigarette economy into an economic miracle through simple deregulation. But nowadays, American free-market economists like Paul Craig Roberts and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's Richard Rahn get better receptions in Eastern Europe and even in the Soviet Union than do American liberals.

As far as economics goes, then, the future of Eastern Europe is likely to be chaotic. It may be prosperous or poor. But insofar as the locals know what they are doing, and can manage to free themselves from the incubus of coercion, the future will not be socialist.

Socialism, however, is a lot more than willful economic illiteracy. After all, the discovery that socialism does not produce the goods is hardly recent. In the postwar period, the late Herbert Marcuse taught a generation of "new" socialists to take capitalism's superior productivity as yet one more reason to hate it. Western Judeo-Christian society would henceforth be condemned not for robbing man in this world but for meeting this-worldly needs so well as to distract "the masses" from the right social values: above all, secularism, equality (or "social justice"), communitarianism, and, most recently added by Marcuse's heirs, protection of the environment. But while there can be no doubt that one or another of the items on this list has motivated intellectuals around the world, it is much to be doubted that they can move significant numbers of ordinary people anywhere—especially in the East, where Communist rule has endowed each item with unpalatable meanings.

Thus, secularism in the East has meant indoctrination into atheism, social and economic discrimination against decent people who are believers, and the spectacle of some churchmen trading the principles they profess for political favor. As a result, churchmen who have stuck to their principles are heroes today. The Catholic Church in Poland is the backbone of the nation. In Hungary the churches are full. Even in traditionally anti-clerical Czechoslovakia, Cardinal Tomasek's December 1989 visit to the Pope glued a nation to the TV set, and the "progressive" Catholic movement *Pacem in Terris* collapsed the moment the regime stopped using it as an anti-religious tool. Precisely because religion was the primary target of Communism, appeals such as Christa Wolf's to save socialism for the sake of "humanism" will mostly fall on deaf ears.

The notion that the state ought to take away from some and give to others for the sake of "social justice" is at least as discredited in the East as secularism. The daily experience of two generations under Communism is precisely of injustices perpetrated and perpetuated under the banner of "social justice." Cynicism runs deep about officials feathering their own nests or the nests of favored minorities under the guise of administering public goods for the good of all.

The socialist value of community has fared no better. In practice it meant societies riddled by informants who earned their own privileges by providing information (true or false, it hardly mattered) on the basis of which privilege could be denied to their neighbors. East Europeans seem to have rebuilt their societies according to precisely the opposite notion of community, shutting the state out of the family, religion, and society in general: human chains symbolically surrounded confessionals in Poland, the homes of dissidents in Rumania, and criss-crossed the land in the Baltics, East Germany, and the Ukraine. The point of the human chains is that society has reestablished itself independent of the state. How far this movement is advancing in Russia itself may be seen in the decanonization of that ideal of socialist family life, Pavel Morozov, the boy who achieved secular sainthood by denouncing his parents to the secret police.

In general, it seems clear that the nations of the East want to liberate themselves from these very "liberations" and return to the main branch of Western civilization. Nothing could be further from the truth than the Marcusean explanation in leftist periodicals such as the *Nation* that the revolt of the East is an amoral spasm of lust after "VCR's and fancy cars" and that "love" and idealism have lost out.

In fact a certain *kind* of idealism has lost out. How far the pendulum will swing in the opposite moral direction remains to be seen. Suffice it to say that the most admired figure in today's Poland is the Pope, the principal democratic force in Croatia puts opposition to abortion high on its agenda, while in Hungary no one has drawn more enthusiastic crowds than the very conservative Otto von Hapsburg.

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A backlash is also virtually certain with regard to the newest banner of socialism, namely, environmentalism. Eastern socialists are slowly following their Western counterparts in changing the predominant color of their banner from red to green. They hope that the task of protecting the environment will open possibilities for the exercise of state power, even as other possibilities are being closed by the rejection of traditional socialism. Although the Soviet empire's record as a despoiler and polluter of nature is unparalleled, Western environmentalists are willing to take Communist leaders at their word, as partners in the "great global cleanup." This is not remarkable—after all, they took them at their word as harbingers of prosperity. But among the peoples of the East, environmental concern bears a closer resemblance to the Western "conservation" movement of more than a generation ago than it does to the notions of modern, leftist Western environmentalism.

The character of Eastern environmentalism may be found in the writings of a Solzhenitsyn, or in the Ukrainian reaction to Chernobyl. The peoples of the East see the environmental devastation of their countries as yet another reason to distrust the state. They see that the only places which have been properly cared for are private farms as well as the semi-private lands belonging to a few well-connected localities. And they see the socialist system not as the potential savior of the environment, but as the principal threat to it

None of this necessarily means that socialism is dead in Eastern Europe. The police remain in the hands of people dedicated to maximizing state power and the chances for chaos, miscalculations, even violence are high. However, it does mean that the peoples of the East have been vaccinated against the idea that social engineers can make them happy. When an "expert" appears in the Western media with a social or economic prescription, some trust him, others doubt, and yet others debate. When an "expert" proposes a "scientific solution" to a social problem in the Eastern media, he is almost universally distrusted. Insofar as the peoples of the East have anything to say about it, social engineering has no future there.

BUT what about Sweden?

For those who do not know it, Sweden seems to prove that it is possible to have a socialism which achieves the kind of economic control characteristic of the East without poverty, and the social agenda of contemporary Western leftists with complete freedom. In fact, however, Sweden is *sui generis*, and its ways are not for export.

With regard to economics, the foremost fact about Sweden is that 94 percent of its GNP is generated by the private sector. In this respect, Sweden is more capitalist than West Germany. Taxes, however, are higher—much higher. The Swedish central government takes and spends almost 57 percent of the nation's product (as opposed to 30 percent by all levels of government in the U.S.), and its top marginal tax rate until recently was 72 percent.

The first lesson here is that it will not do to cite Sweden in support of the proposition that an economy with only a modest private sector can generate prosperity. If the Soviet Union wants to be as prosperous as Sweden, there is no alternative to being 94-percent capitalist—like Sweden. At that point the problem for Eastern socialists who would like to imitate Sweden would be to convince all those owners of private wealth to let the socialists take and spend most of it.

Here is where Sweden's uniqueness tells the tale. Swedish society has long been unusually homogeneous—ethnically, religiously, and, for the most part, economically. There is no history of internal strife. When social democracy came to Sweden, it promised the secure, equal enjoyment of a wealth that *already existed* and that was already widely shared. The secret of popular acquiescence was that the Swedes trusted their leaders collectively to know better than any individual how to allocate the wealth of all, and to be fair in the administration of, in effect, a nationwide family.

The peoples of the East are not one big happy family. It is unimaginable that, emerging from generations of exploitation on the part of their leaders, they would now entrust another set of leaders with most of the fruits of their labors. That would be so even if the countries of the East were not full of ethnic and religious differences. But as things stand, it is even doubtful that there will exist enough trust in the East to carry out the basic operations of capitalism. After generations of fraud, will multimillion zloty or ruble deals be closed with a raised finger on a trading floor, or with a phone call? Swedish-style faith in impartial government is altogether out of the question.

Interestingly enough, a half-century of socialism has taken its toll on Swedish society as well. Swedes speak of their country as being ruled by "the Royal Swedish Envy"—the vigilant sentiment of every citizen that his neighbor not be allowed to take the least farthing more out of the public pot than is due to him, or withhold so much as a penny of what he owes, or violate any of the innumerable regulations on everything from walking dogs to raising children. This mutual espionage is not entirely different from that which characterizes life in the East. People are quite simply encouraged to report one another's shortcomings. Indeed, Sweden has the world's highest rate of children removed from their parents' custody because the state has deemed the parents unfit.

Not surprisingly, as the spirit of Swedish generosity has waned, public services have deterioted. Schools are in disrepair and waiting lines at

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hospitals stretch out. The progressive deterioration of the socioeconomic environment in Sweden has been measured by the emigration of about 20,000 of the country's most energetic and talented professionals each year—again, shades of the East—and has recently enabled Minister of Finance Kjell Otto Feldt, a right-wing Social Democrat, to convince the government to reduce the top marginal tax rate to 55 percent. But the tax rate is just part of the climate that many consider too stultifying.

The noneconomic side of Swedish socialism is also based on the society's—and even more, on the leadership's—homogeneity. All major private interests are invited to take part in the process of government, and empowered to carry out decisions reached by consensus. Because no interest group fears that it will be exploited too badly, none accuses the other. For example, what outsiders call the country's secularism exists with the full participation of the Lutheran Church. (Church and state are intertwined in Sweden in ways that would violate the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution.) Also, while believing itself egalitarian, Sweden maintains the largest inherited-title aristocracy in Europe, and nowhere, except possibly in the Soviet Union, does one see so many medals distinguishing so many chests. Similarly, the country prides itself on its environmentalism, but as one diplomat has said: "The Swedes can be wonderfully pragmatic about pollution."

In an atmosphere where questioning the competence or motives of high-ranking figures is the practical definition of treason, getting A's for performance is considered a natural right. Thus, Sweden's social experiments are all declared successful, even when they fail. Social policies may change, and indeed in the economic realm are changing fast in a direction away from socialism. But no one of importance will run an anti-establishment campaign.

The only lesson Sweden can teach pluralistic countries with rough-and-tumble political traditions is: don't even think about it. Sweden is nobody's future—possibly not even Sweden's.

THE desire to manage human affairs so as to eliminate the sources of discord among human beings, to guarantee health, wealth, and wisdom, has deep roots in human nature. Throughout history this desire has manifested itself in a variety of movements. Depending on the circumstances, the language of these movements has been dominated by religion or by anti-religion, by an idea of economic plenty or by asceticism. But as Norman Cohn showed a generation ago in *The Pursuit of the Millennium*, despite many differences these movements display a number of shared motivations, objectives, and methods, among them the claim that society (or the world) is so deeply sick that it is about to end, that "our movement" has special knowledge of what to do about it, and hence ought to be given extraordinary power.

Marxism is the most recent of these movements to stir up the world. It has spoken the language of economics. But the economic record of the Soviet Union, and indeed of all the lands ruled by Marxists, has made this language untenable (except at Western universities). Today, people whose discourse contains the phrase "If we are to survive, we must . . ." tend to be riding causes—global warming, ozone depletion, racism, sexism, homophobia—nowhere near so potent as those of their forefathers. Nevertheless, these people have the very same problems their forefathers did: shielding their special knowledge from scrutiny and their social laboratories from competition and dissent.

The odds seem against them. This is not, however, to maintain that tyranny is a thing of the past. On the contrary, when persuasion fails, those who possess military power are all the more tempted to rule by force. Thus in January Soviet troops invaded Azerbaijan to save the Communist party, which the anti-Communist popular front had reduced to political irrelevance. Similarly, today's China is as tyrannical as ever, though much less animated by socialist thought than ever. And so the specter of Deng Xiaoping may well be likelier to haunt the world than that of Olof Palme.

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Death With Dignity & the Sanctity of Life

Leon R. Kass

Dedicated to the memory of my mother, Chana Kass (1903-1989), my first and best teacher regarding human dignity.

"CALL no man happy until he is dead." With these deliberately paradoxical words, the ancient Athenian sage Solon reminds the self-satisfied Croesus of the perils of fortune and the need to see the end of a life before pronouncing on its happiness. Even the richest man on earth has little control over his fate. The unpredictability of human life is an old story; many a once-flourishing life has ended in years of debility, dependence, and disgrace. But today, it seems, the problems of the ends of lives are more acute, a consequence, ironically, of successful—or partly successful—human efforts to do battle with fortune and, in particular, to roll back medically the causes of death. While many look forward to further triumphs in the war against mortality, others here and now want to exercise greater control over the end of life, by electing death to avoid the burdens of lingering on. The failures resulting from the fight against fate are to be resolved by taking fate still further into our own hands.

This is no joking matter. Nor are the questions it raises academic. The emerge, insistently and urgently, from poignant human situations, occurring daily in hospitals and nursing homes, as patients and families and physicians are compelled to decide matters of life and death, often in the face only of unattractive, even horrible, alternatives. Shall I allow the doctors to put a feeding tube into my eighty-five-year-old mother, who is unable to swallow as a result of a stroke? Now that it is inserted and she is not recovering, may I have it removed? When would it be right to remove a respirator, forgo renal dialysis, bypass life-saving surgery, or omit giving antibiotics for pneumonia? When in the course of my own progressive dementia will it be right for my children to put me into a home or for me to ask my doctor or my wife or my daughter for a lethal injection? When, if ever, should I as a physician or husband or son accede to—or be forgiven for acceding to—such a request?

These dilemmas can be multiplied indefinitely, and their human significance is hard to capture in words. For one thing, posing them as well-defined problems to be solved abstracts from the full human picture, and ignores such matters as the relations between the generations, the meaning of old age, attitudes toward mortality, religious faith, economic resources, and the like. Also, speech does not begin to convey the anguish and heartache felt by those who concretely confront such terrible decisions, nor can it do much to aid and comfort them. No amount of philosophizing is going to substitute for discernment, compassion, courage, sobriety, tact, thoughtfulness, or prudence, all needed on the spot.

Yet the attitudes, sentiments, and judgments of human agents on the spot are influenced, often unwittingly, by speech and opinion, and by the terms in which we formulate our concerns. Some speech may illuminate, other speech may distort; some terms may be more or less appropriate to the matter at hand. About death and dying, once subjects treated with decorous or superstitious silence, there is today an abundance of talk—not to say indecorous chatter. Moreover, this talk frequently proceeds under the aegis of certain increasingly accepted terminologies, which are, in my view, both questionable in themselves and dangerous in their influence. As a result, we are producing a recipe for disaster: urgent difficulties, great human anguish, and high emotions, stirred up with inadequate thinking. We have no choice but to reflect on our speech and our terminology.

LET me illustrate the power—and the possible mischief—of one notion currently in vogue: the notion of rights. It is now fashionable, in many aspects of public life, to demand what one wants or needs as a matter of rights. How to do the right thing gets translated into a right to get or do your own thing. Thus, roughly two decades ago, faced with the unwelcome fact of excessive medical efforts to forestall death, people asserted and won a right to refuse life-prolonging treatment found to be useless or burdensome. This was, in fact, a reaffirmation of

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the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, even in the face of imminent death. It enabled dying patients to live as they wished, free of unwelcome intrusions, and to let death come when it would. Today, the demand has been raised: we find people asserting a "right to die," grounded not in objective conditions regarding prognosis or the uselessness of treatment, but in the supremacy of choice itself. In the name of choice people claim the right to choose to cease to be choosing beings. From such a right to refuse not only treatment but life itself—from a right to become dead—it is then a small step to the right to be *made* dead: from my right to die will follow your duty to assist me in dying, i.e., to become the agent of my death, if I am not able, or do not wish, to kill myself. And, thanks to our egalitarian tendencies, it will continue to be an easy step to extend all these rights even to those who are incapable of claiming or exercising them for themselves, with proxies empowered to exercise a right to demand death for the comatose.[1] No one bothers very much about where these putative rights come from or what makes them right, and simple reflection will show that many of them are incoherent.

Comparable mischief can, of course, be done beginning with the notion of duty. From the acknowledged human duty not to shed innocent blood follows the public duty to protect life against those who would threaten it. This gets extended to a duty to preserve life in the face of disease or other non-human dangers to life. This gets extended to a duty to prolong life whenever possible, regardless of the condition of that life or the wishes of its bearer. This gets extended to an unconditional duty never to let death happen, if it is in one's power to do so. This position, sometimes alleged—I think mistakenly—to be entailed by belief in the "sanctity of life," could even make obligatory a search for the conquest of death altogether, through research on aging. Do we have such duties? On what do they rest? And can such a duty to prevent death—or a right to life—be squared with a right to be made dead? Is not this intransigent language of rights and duties unsuitable for finding the best course of action, in these terribly ambiguous and weighty matters? We must try to become more thoughtful about the terms we use and the questions we pose.

Toward this end I wish to explore here the relation between two other powerful notions, both prominent in the discussions regarding the end of life: death with dignity, and the sanctity of life. Both convey elevated, indeed lofty, ideas: what, after all, could be higher than human dignity, unless it were something sacred? As a result, each phrase often functions as a slogan or a rallying cry, though seldom with any regard for its meaning or ground. In the current debates about euthanasia, we are often told that these notions pull in opposite directions. Upholding death with dignity might mean taking actions that would seem to deny the sanctity of life. Conversely, unswervingly upholding the sanctity of life might mean denying to some a dignified death. This implied opposition is, for many of us, very disquieting. The dilemmas themselves are bad enough. Much worse is it to contemplate that human dignity and sanctity might be opposed, and that we may be forced to choose between them.[2]

THE confrontation between upholders of death with dignity and upholders of the sanctity of life is in fact nothing new. Two decades ago, the contest was over termination of treatment and letting die. Today and tomorrow, the issue is and will be assisted suicide, mercy killing, so-called active euthanasia. On the extremes stand the same opponents, many of whom—I think mistakenly—think the issues are the same. Many who now oppose mercy killing or voluntary euthanasia then opposed termination of treatment, thinking it equivalent to killing. Those who today back mercy killing in fact agree: if it is permissible to choose death by letting die, they argue, why not also by active steps to hasten, humanely, the desired death? Failing to distinguish between letting die and making dead (by failing to distinguish between intentions and deeds, causes and results, goals and outcomes), both sides polarize the debate, opposing not only one another but also those in the uncomfortable middle. For them, it is *either* sanctity of life *or* death with dignity: one must choose.

I do not accept this polarization. Indeed, in the rest of this essay I mean to suggest the following. First, human dignity and the sanctity of life are not only compatible, but, if rightly understood, go hand in hand. Second, death with dignity, rightly understood, has largely to do with exercising the humanity that life makes possible, often to the very end, and very little to do with medical procedures or the causes of death. Third, the sanctity-and-dignity of life is entirely compatible with letting die but not with deliberately killing. Finally, the practice of euthanasia will not promote human dignity, and our rush to embrace it will in fact only accelerate the various tendencies

[1] Precisely such a (constitutionally protected) right to become dead, claimed by proxies on behalf of a permanently comatose other, is being asserted in the *Cruzan* case, now under review by the United States Supreme Court.

[2] Some people, in contrast, are delighted with this polarized framing of the question. For they see it as the conflict between a vigorous humanism and an anachronistic otherworldliness foisted upon the West by the Judeo-Christian tradition. For those who deny the sacred, it is desirable to represent the arguments against suicide or mercy killing (or abortion) as purely religious in character—there being in truth, on their view, nothing higher than human dignity. The chief proponent of the recent "Humane and Dignified Death Act" in California is reported to have said that he was seeking to "overturn the sanctity-of-life principle" in American law.

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in our society that undermine not only dignified conduct but even decent human relations.

The Sanctity of Life (and Human Dignity)

WHAT exactly is meant by the sanctity of life? This turns out to be difficult to say. In the strictest sense, sanctity of life would mean that life is *in itself* something holy or sacred, transcendent, set apart—like God Himself. Or, again, focusing on our responses to the sacred, it would mean that life is something before which we stand (or should stand) with reverence, awe, and grave respect—because it is beyond us and unfathomable. In more modest but also more practical terms, to regard life as sacred means that it should not be violated, opposed, or destroyed, and, positively, that it should be protected, defended, and preserved. Despite their differences, these various formulations agree in this: that "sacredness," whatever it is, inheres in life itself, and that life, *by its very being,* calls forth an appropriate human response, whether of veneration or restraint. To say that sacredness is something that can be conferred or ascribed—or removed—by solely human agreement or decision is to miss the point entirely.

I have made a modest and so far unsuccessful effort to trace the origin of the sanctity-of-life doctrine in our own Judeo-Christian traditions. To the best of my knowledge, the phrase "sanctity of life" does not occur either in the Hebrew Bible or in the New Testament. Life as such is not said to be holy (*qâdosh*), as is, for example, the Sabbath. The Jewish people are said to be a holy people, and they are enjoined to be holy as God is holy. True, traditional Judaism places great emphasis on preserving human life—even the holy Sabbath may be violated to save a life, implying to some that a human life is more to be revered than the Sabbath—yet the duty to preserve one's life is not unconditional: to cite only one example, a Jew should accept martyrdom rather than commit idolatry, adultery, or murder.

As murder is the most direct assault on human life and the most explicit denial of its sanctity, perhaps we gain some access to the meaning of the sanctity of life by thinking about why murder is proscribed. If we could uncover the ground of restraint against murder, perhaps we could learn something of the nature of the sanctity of life, and, perhaps, too, of its relation to human dignity. As a result, we might be in a better position to consider the propriety of letting die, of euthanasia, and of other activities advocated by the adherents of "death with dignity."

Why is killing another human being wrong? Can the prospective victim's request to be killed nullify the wrongness of such killing, or, what is more, make such killing right? Alternatively, are there specifiable states or conditions of a human being's life that would justify—or excuse—someone else's directly and intentionally making him dead, even *without* request? The first question asks about murder, the second and third ask whether assisting suicide and mercy killing (so-called active euthanasia) can and should be morally distinguished from murder. The answers regarding assisting suicide and euthanasia will depend on the answer regarding murder, that is, on the *reasons* it is wrong.[3]

WHY is murder wrong? The laws against murder are, of course, socially useful. Though murders still occur, despite the proscriptive law and the threat of punishment, civil society is possible only because people generally accept and abide by the reasonableness of this rule. In exchange for society's protection of one's own life against those who might otherwise take it away, each member of society sacrifices, in principle, his (natural) right to the lives of all others. Civil society requires peace, and civil peace depends absolutely on the widespread adherence to the maxim, "Thou shalt not murder." This usefulness of the taboo against murder is sometimes offered as the basis of its goodness: killing is bad because it makes life unsafe and society impossible.

But this alone cannot account for the taboo against murder. In fact, the goodness of civil society is itself predicated upon the goodness of human life, which society is instituted to defend and foster. Civil society exists to defend the goods implicit in the taboo against murder, at least as much as the taboo against murder is useful in preserving civil society.

However valuable any life may be to society, each life is primarily and preeminently valued by the person whose life it is. Individuals strive to stay alive, both consciously and unconsciously. The living body, quite on its own, bends every effort to maintain its living existence. The built-in impulses toward self-preservation and individual well-being that penetrate our consciousness, say, as hunger or fear of death, are manifestations of a deep-seated and powerful will-to-live. These thoughts might suggest that murder is wrong

[3] Not all taking of human life is murder. Self-defense, war, and capital punishment have been moral grounds used to justify homicide, and it is a rare moralist who would argue that it is never right to kill another human being. Without arguing about these exceptions, we confine our attention to murder, which is, by definition, unjust or wrongful killing. Everyone knows it to be wrong, immediately and without argument. Rarely do we ask ourselves why.

This is, of course, as it should be. The most important insights on which decent society rests—e.g., the taboos against incest, cannibalism, murder, and adultery—are too important to be imperiled by reason's poor power to give them convincing defense. Such taboos might themselves be the incarnation of reason, even as they resist attempts to give them logical demonstration; like the axioms of geometry, they might be at once incapable of proof and yet not in need of proof, i.e., self-evident to anyone not morally blind. What follows, then, is more a search for insight than an attempt at proof.

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because it opposes this will-to-live, because it deprives another of life against his will, because it kills someone who does not *want* to die. This sort of reason would explain why suicide—self-willed self-killing—might be right, while murder—killing an innocent person against his will—would always be wrong.

Let us consider this view more closely. Certainly, there are some invasions or "violations" of another's body that are made innocent by consent. Blows struck in a boxing match or on the football field do not constitute assault; conversely, an unwelcome kiss from a stranger, because it is an unconsented touching, constitutes a battery, actionable at law. In these cases, the willingness or unwillingess of the "victim" alone determines the rightness or wrongness of the bodily blows. Similar arguments are today used to explain the wrongness of rape: it is "against our wills," a violation not (as we once thought) of womanliness or chastity or nature but of freedom, autonomy, personal self-determination. If consent excuses—or even justifies—these "attacks" on the body of another, might not consent excuse—or justify—the ultimate, i.e., lethal, attack, turning murder into mere (unwrongful) homicide? A person can be murdered only if he personally does not want to be dead.

There is something obviously troublesome about this way of thinking about crimes against persons. Indeed, the most abominable practices, proscribed in virtually all societies, are *not* excused by consent. Incest, even between consenting adults, is still incest; cannibalism would not become merely *delicatessen* if the victim freely gave permission; ownership of human beings, voluntarily accepted, would still be slavery. The violation of the other is independent of the state of the will (in fact, both of victim and perpetrator).

The question can be put this way: is the life of another human being to be respected only because that person (or society) *deems* or *wills* it respectable, or is it to be respected because it *is in itself* respectable? If the former, then human worth depends solely on agreement or human will; since will confers dignity, will can take it away, and a permission to violate nullifies the violation. If the latter, then one can never be freed from the obligation to respect human life by a request to do so, say, from someone who no longer values his own life.

This latter view squares best with our intuitions. We are not entitled to dismember the corpse of a suicide nor may we kill innocently those consumed by self-hatred. According to our law, killing the willing, the unwilling, and the non-willing (e.g., infants, the comatose) are all equally murder. Beneath the human will, indeed, the *ground* of human will, is something that commands respect and restraint, willy-nilly. We are to abstain from killing because of something respectable about human beings as such. But what is it?

In Western societies, moral notions trace back to biblical religion. The bedrock of Jewish and Christian morality is the Ten Commandments. "Thou shalt not murder"—the sixth commandment—heads up the so-called second table, which enunciates (negatively) duties toward one's fellow man. From this fact, some people have argued that murder is wrong solely because God said so. After all, that He had to legislate against it might imply that human beings on their own did not know that it was bad or wrong. And even were they to intuit *that* murder is wrong, they might never be able to answer, if challenged, *why* it is wrong; this human inability to supply the reason would threaten the power of the taboo. Thus, so the argument goes, God's will supplies the missing reason for the human rule.

This argument is not satisfactory. True, divine authority elevates the standing and force of the commandments. But it does not follow that they "make sense" only because God willed them. Pagans yesterday believed and atheists today still believe that murder is wrong. In fact, the entire second table of the Decalogue is said to propound not so much divine law as natural law, law suitable for man as man, not only for Jew or Christian.

The Bible itself provides evidence in support of this interpretation, at least about murder. In reporting the first murder, committed by Cain upon his brother Abel before there was any given or known law against it, Abel's blood is said to cry out from the earth in protest against his brother's deed. (The crime, it seems, was a crime against blood and life, not against will, human or divine.) And Cain's denial of knowledge ("Am I my brother's keeper?") seems a clear indication of guilt: if there were nothing wrong with murder, why hide one's responsibility? A "proto-religious" dread accompanies the encounter with death, especially violent death.

But the best evidence comes shortly afterward, in the story of the covenant with Noah: the first law against murder is explicitly promulgated for all mankind united, well before there are Jews or Christians or Muslims. This passage is worth looking at in some detail because, unlike the enunciation of the sixth commandment, it offers a specific reason why murder is wrong.[4]

[4] Non-religious readers may rightly express suspicion at my appeal to a biblical text for what I will claim is a universal or philosophical explanation of the taboo against murder. This suspicion will be further increased by the content of the text cited. Nevertheless, properly interpreted, I believe the teaching of the passage stands free of its especially biblical roots, and offers a profound insight into the ground of our respect for human life.

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The prohibition of murder is part of the new order following the Flood. Before the Flood, human beings lived in the absence of law or civil society. The result appears to be something like what Hobbes called the state of nature characterized as a condition of war of each against all. Might alone makes right, and no one is safe. The Flood washes out human life in its natural state; immediately after the Flood, some form of law and justice is instituted, and nascent civil society is founded.

At the forefront of the new order is a newly articulated respect for human life,[5] expressed in the announcement of the punishment for homicide:

> Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God made He man. [Genesis 9:6]

Like law in general, this cardinal law combines speech and force. The threat of capital punishment stands as a deterrent to murder and hence provides a motive for obedience. But the measure of the punishment is instructive. By equating a life for a life—*no more* than a life for a life, and the life only of the murderer, not also of his wife and children—the threatened punishment implicitly teaches the *equal* worth of each human life. Such equality can be grounded only in the equal *humanity* of each human being. Against our own native self-preference, and against our tendency to overvalue what is our own, blood-for-blood conveys the message of universality and equality.

But murder is to be avoided not only to avoid the punishment. That may be a motive, which speaks to our fears; but there is also a reason, which speaks to our minds and our loftier sentiments. The fundamental reason that makes murder wrong—and that even justifies punishing it homicidally!—is man's divine-like status.[6] Not the other fellow's unwillingness to be killed, not even (or only) our desire to avoid sharing his fate, but *his*—any man's—*very being* requires that we respect his life. Human life is to be respected more than animal life, because man is more than an animal; man is said to be god-like. Please note that the *truth* of the Bible's assertion does *not* rest on biblical authority: man's more-than-animal status is in fact performatively proved whenever human beings quit the state of nature and set up life under such a law. The law which establishes that men are to be law-abiding both insists on, and thereby demonstrates the truth of, the superiority of man.

How is man God-like? Genesis 1—where it is first said that man is created in God's image—introduces us to the divine *activities* and *powers*: (1) God speaks, commands, names, and blesses; (2) God makes and makes freely; (3) God looks at and beholds the world; (4) God is concerned with the goodness or perfection of things; (5) God addresses solicitously other living creatures. In short: God exercises speech and reason, freedom in doing and making, and the powers of contemplation, judgment, and care.

Doubters may wonder whether this is truly the case about God—after all, it is only on biblical authority that we regard God as possessing these powers and activities. But it is certain that we human beings have them, and that they lift us above the plane of a merely animal existence. Human beings, alone among the earthly creatures, speak, plan, create, contemplate, and judge. Human beings, alone among the creatures, can articulate a future goal and bring it into being by their own purposive conduct. Human beings, alone among the creatures, can think about the whole, marvel at its articulated order, and feel awe in beholding its grandeur and in pondering the mystery of its source.

A complementary, preeminently moral, gloss on the "image of God" is provided—quite explicitly—in Genesis 3, at the end of the so-called second creation story:

> Now the man is become *like one of us* knowing good and bad. . . . [3:22; emphasis added][7]

Human beings, unlike the other animals, distinguish good and bad, have opinions and care about their difference, and constitute their whole life in the light of this distinction. Animals may suffer good and bad, but they have no notion of either. Indeed, the very pronouncement, "Murder is bad," constitutes proof of *this* god-like quality of human beings.

In sum, man has special standing because he shares in reason, freedom, judgment, and moral concern, and, as a result, lives a life freighted with moral self-consciousness. Speech and freedom are used, among other things, to promulgate moral rules and to pass moral judgments, first among which is that murder is to be punished in kind because it violates the dignity of such a moral

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[5] This respect for human life, and the self-conscious establishment of society on this premise, separates human beings from the rest of the animals. This separation is made emphatic by the institution of meat-eating (Genesis 9:1-4), permitted to men here for the first time. (One can, I believe, show that the permission to eat meat is a concession to human blood lust and voracity, not something cheerfully and happily endorsed.) Yet, curiously, even animal life must be treated with respect: the blood, which is identified as the life, cannot be eaten. Human life, as we shall see more clearly, is thus both continuous and discontinuous with animal life.

[6] The second part of verse 6 seems to make two points: man is in the image of God (i.e., is god-*like*), and man was *made* thus by God. The decisive point is the first. Man's creatureliness cannot be the reason for avoiding bloodshed; the animals too were made by God, yet permission to kill them for food has just been given. The full weight rests on man's *being* "in the image of God."

[7] In the first creation story, Genesis 1-2:3, man is created straightaway in God's likeness; in this second account, man is, to begin with, made of dust, and he *acquires* god-like qualities only at the end, and then only in transgressing.

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being. We note a crucial implication. To put it simply: the *sanctity* of human life rests absolutely on the *dignity*—the god-like-ness—of human beings.

Yet man is, at most, only god*ly*; he is not God or a god. To be an image is also to be *different* from that of which one is an image. Man is, at most, a *mere* likeness of God. With us, the seemingly godly powers and concerns described above occur conjoined with our animality. We are also flesh and blood—no less than the other animals. God's image is tied to blood, which is the life.

The point is crucial, and stands apart from the text that teaches it: everything high about human life—thinking, judging, loving, willing, acting—depends absolutely on everything low—metabolism, digestion, respiration, circulation, excretion. In the case of human beings, "divinity" needs blood—or "mere" life—to sustain itself. And because of what it holds up, human blood—that is, human life—deserves special respect, beyond what is owed to life as such: the low ceases to be the low. (Modern physiological evidence could be adduced in support of this thesis: in human beings, posture, gestalt, respiration, sexuality, and fetal and infant development, among other things, all show the marks of the co-presence of rationality.) The biblical text elegantly mirrors this truth about its subject, subtly merging both high and low: though the *reason* given for punishing murder concerns man's *godliness*, the *injunction* itself concerns man's *blood*. Respect the god-like; do not shed its blood! Respect for anything *human* requires respecting *everything* human, requires respecting *human being* as such.

We have found, I believe, what we were searching for: a reason immanent in the nature of things for finding fault with taking human life, apart from the needs of society or the will of the victim. The wanton spilling of human blood is a violation and a desecration, not only of our laws and wills but of being itself.

We have also found the ground for repudiating the opposition between the sanctity of life and human dignity. Each rests on the other. Or, rather, they are mutually implicated, as inseparable as the concave and the convex. Those who seek to pull them apart are, I submit, also engaged in wanton, albeit intellectual, violence.

UNFORTUNATELY, the matter cannot simply rest here. Though the principle seems well established, there is a difficulty, raised in fact by the text itself. How can one assert the inviolability of human life and, in the same breath, insist that human beings deliberately *take* human life to punish those who shed human blood?[8] There are, it seems, sometimes good reasons for shedding human blood, notwithstanding that man is in God's image. We have admitted the dangerous principle: humanity, to uphold the dignity of the human, must sometimes shed human blood.

Bringing this new principle to the case of euthanasia, we face the following challenge to the prior, and more fundamental, principle, shed no human blood: what are we to think when the continuing circulation of human blood no longer holds up anything very high, when it holds up little more—or even *no* more—than metabolism, digestion, respiration, circulation, and excretion? What if human godliness appears to be humiliated by the degradation of Alzheimer's disease or paraplegia or rampant malignancy? And what if it is the well-considered aspiration of the "god-like" to put an end to the humiliation of that very godliness, to halt the mockery that various severe debilities make of a *human* life? Are there here to be found other exceptions to our rule against murder, in which the dignity of a human life can (only?) be respected by ending it?

The first thing to observe, of course, is that the cases of euthanasia (or suicide) and capital punishment are vastly different. One cannot by an act of euthanasia deter or correct or obtain justice from the "violator" of human dignity; senility and terminal illness are of natural origin and can be blamed on no human agent. To be precise, these evils may in their result undermine human dignity, but, lacking malevolent intention, cannot be said to insult it or deny it. They are reasons for sadness, not in*dign*ation, unless one believes, as the tyrant does, that the cosmos owes him good and not evil and exists to satisfy his every wish. Moreover, one does not come to the defense of diminished human dignity by finishing the job, by annihilating the victims. Human dignity would be no more vindicated by euthanizing patients with Alzheimer's disease than it would be by executing as polluted the victims of rape.

Nevertheless, the question persists, and an affirmative answer remains the point of departure for the active euthanasia movement. Many who fly the banner of "death with dignity" insist that it centrally includes the option of active euthanasia, especially when requested. In order to respond more adequately to this challenge, we need first a more careful inquiry into "death with dignity."

[8] Does this mean that those who murder forfeit their claim to be humanly respected, because they implicitly have denied the humanity of their victim (and, thus, in principle, of their own—and all other—human life)? In other words, do men need to act in accordance with the self-knowledge of human godliness in order to be treated accordingly? Or, conversely, do we rather respect the humanity of murderers when we punish them, even capitally, treating them not as crazed or bestial but as responsible moral agents who accept the fair consequences of their deeds? Or is the capitalness of the punishment not a theoretical matter, but a practical one, intended mainly to deter by fear those whose self-love or will-to-power will not listen to reason? These are vexed questions, too complicated to sort out quickly, and, in any case, beyond the point of the present discussion. Yet the relevant difficulty persists.

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Death With Dignity

THE phrase "death with dignity," whatever it means precisely, certainly implies that there are more and less dignified ways to die. The demand for death with dignity arises only because more and more people are encountering in others and fearing for themselves or their loved ones the deaths of the less dignified sort. This point is indisputable. The possibility of dying with dignity can be diminished or undermined by many things, for example, by coma or senility or madness, by unbearable pain or extensive paralysis, by isolation, by institutionalization or destitution, by sudden death, as well as by excessive or impersonal medical interventions directed toward the postponement of death. It is the impediments connected with modern medicine that increasingly arouse indignation, and the demand for death with dignity pleads for the removal of these "unnatural" obstacles.

More generally, the demand for autonomy and the cry for dignity are asserted against a medicalization and institutionalization of the end of life that robs the old and the incurable of most of their autonomy and dignity: intubated and electrified, with bizarre mechanical companions, confined and immobile, helpless and regimented, once proud and independent people find themselves cast in the roles of passive, obedient, highly disciplined children. Death with dignity means, in the first instance, the removal of these added indignities and dehumanizations of the end of life.

One can only sympathize with this concern. Yet even if successful, efforts to remove these obstacles would not yet produce a death with dignity. For one thing, not all obstacles to dignity are artificial and externally imposed. Infirmity and incompetence, dementia and immobility—all of them of natural origins—greatly limit human possibility, and for many of us they will be sooner or later unavoidable, the products of inevitable bodily or mental decay. Second, there is nothing of human dignity in the process of dying itself—only in the way we face it: at its best, death with complete dignity will always be compromised by the extinction of dignified humanity; it is, I suspect, a death-denying culture's anger about dying and mortality that expresses itself in the partly oxymoronic and unreasonable demand for dignity in death. Third, insofar as we seek better health and longer life, insofar as we turn to doctors to help us get better, we necessarily and voluntarily compromise our dignity: being a patient rather than an agent is, humanly speaking, undignified. All people, especially the old, willingly, if unknowingly, accept a whole stable of indignities simply by seeking medical assistance. The really proud people refuse altogether to submit to doctors and hospitals. It is well to be reminded of these limits on our ability to roll back the indignities that assault the dying, so that we might acquire more realistic expectations about just how much dignity a "death-with-dignity" campaign can provide.

A death with positive dignity—which may turn out to be something rare, like a life with dignity—entails more than the absence of external indignities. Dignity in the face of death cannot be given or conferred from the outside but requires a dignity of soul in the human being who faces it. To understand the meaning of and prospects for death with dignity, we need first to think more about dignity itself, what it is.

Dignity is, to begin with, an undemocratic idea. The central notion, etymologically, both in English and in its Latin root (*dignitas*), is that of worthiness, elevation, honor, nobility, height—in short, of excellence or virtue. In all its meanings it is a term of distinction; dignity is not something which, like a nose or a navel, is to be expected or found in every living human being. Dignity is, in principle, aristocratic.

It follows that dignity, thus understood, cannot be demanded or claimed; for it cannot be provided and it is not owed. One has no more *right* to dignity—and hence to dignity in death—than one has to beauty or courage or wisdom, desirable though these all may be.

One can, of course, seek to democratize the principle; one can argue that "excellence," "being worthy," is a property of all human beings, say, for example, in comparison with animals or plants, or with machines. This, I take it, is what is often meant by "*human* dignity." This is also what is implied when one asserts that much of the terminal treatment of dying patients is dehumanizing, or that attachments to catheters, respirators, and suction tubes hide the human countenance and thereby insult the dignity of the dying. I myself earlier argued that the special dignity of the human species, thus understood, is the ground of the sanctity of human life. Yet on further examination this universal attribution of dignity to human beings pays tribute more to human potentiality, to the *possibilities* for human excellence. *Full* dignity, or dignity properly so-called, would depend on the *realization* of these possibilities. *Among* human beings, there would still be, on any such material principle, distinctions to be made. If universal human dignity is grounded, for example, in the moral life, in that everyone faces and makes moral choices, dignity would seem to depend mainly on having a *good* moral life, that is, on choosing well. Is there not more dignity in the courageous than in the cowardly, in the moderate than in the self-indulgent, in the righteous than in the wicked?[9]

[9] This is not necessarily to say that one should treat other people, including those who eschew dignity, as if they lacked it. This is a separable question. It may be salutary to treat people on the basis of their capacities to live humanly, despite even great falling short or even willful self-degradation. Yet this would, in the moral sphere at least, require that we expect and demand of people that they behave worthily and that we hold them responsible for their own conduct.

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But courage, moderation, righteousness, and the other human virtues are not solely confined to the few. Many of us strive for them, with partial success, and still more of us do ourselves honor when we recognize and admire those people nobler and finer than ourselves. With proper models, proper rearing, and proper encouragement, many of us can be and act more in accord with our higher natures. In these ways, the openness to dignity can perhaps be democratized still further.

In truth, if we know how to look, we find evidence of human dignity all around us, in the valiant efforts ordinary people make to meet necessity, to combat adversity and disappointment, to provide for their children, to care for their parents, to help their neighbors, to serve their country. Life provides numerous hard occasions that call for endurance and equanimity, generosity and kindness, courage and self-command. Adversity sometimes brings out the best in a man, and often shows best what he is made of. Confronting our own death—or the deaths of our beloved ones—provides an opportunity for the exercise of our humanity, for the great and small alike. Death with dignity, in its most important sense, would mean a dignified attitude and virtuous conduct in the face of death.

WHAT would such a dignified facing of death require? First of all, it would require knowing that one is dying. One cannot attempt to settle accounts, make arrangements, complete projects, keep promises, or say farewell if one does not know the score. Second, it requires that one remain to some degree an agent rather than (just) a patient. One cannot make a good end of one's life if one is buffeted about by forces beyond one's control, if one is denied a decisive share in decisions about medical treatments, institutionalization, and the way to spend one's remaining time. Third, it requires the upkeep—as much as possible—of one's familial, social, and professional relationships and activities. One cannot function as an actor if one has been swept off the stage and been abandoned by the rest of the cast. It would also seem to require some direct, self-conscious confrontation, in the loneliness of one's soul, with the brute fact and meaning of nearing one's end. Even, or especially, as he must be passive to the forces of decay, the dignified human being can preserve and reaffirm his humanity by seeing clearly and without illusion.[10] (It is for this reason, among others, that sudden and unexpected death, however painless, robs a man of the opportunity to have a dignified end.)

But as a dignified human life is not just a lonely project against an inevitable death, but a life whose meaning is entwined in human relationships, we must stress again the importance for a death with dignity—as for a life with dignity—of dignified human intercourse with all those around us. Who we are to ourselves is largely inseparable from who we are to and for others; thus, our own exercise of dignified humanity will depend crucially on continuing to receive respectful treatment from others. The manner in which we are addressed, what is said to us or in our presence, how our bodies are tended or our feelings regarded—in all these ways, our dignity in dying can be nourished and sustained. Dying people are all too easily reduced ahead of time to "thinghood" by those who cannot bear to deal with the suffering or disability of those they love. Objectification and detachment are understandable defenses. Yet this withdrawal of contact, affection, and care is probably the greatest single cause of the dehumanization of dying. Death with dignity requires absolutely that the survivors treat the human being at all times as if full god-likeness remains, up to the very end.

It will, I hope, now be perfectly clear that death with dignity, understood as living dignifiedly in the face of death, is not a matter of pulling plugs or taking poison. To speak this way—and it is unfortunately common to speak this way[11]—is to shrink still further the notion of human dignity, and thus heap still greater indignity upon the dying, beyond all the insults of illness and the medicalized bureaucratization of the end of life. If it really is death with dignity we are after, we must think in human and not technical terms. With these thoughts firmly in mind, we can turn in closing back to the matter of euthanasia.

Euthanasia: Undignified and Dangerous

HAVING followed the argument to this point, even a friendly reader might chide me as follows: "Well and good to think humanistically, but tough practical dilemmas arise, precisely about the use of techniques, and they must be addressed. Not everyone is so fortunate as to be able to die at home, in the company of a loving family, beyond the long reach of the medical-industrial complex. How should these

[10] The Homeric warriors, preoccupied with mortality and refusing to hide away in a corner waiting for death to catch them unawares, went boldly forward to meet it, armed only with their own prowess and large hearts; in facing death frontally, in the person of another similarly self-conscious hero, they wrested a human victory over blind necessity, even in defeat. On a much humbler scale, the same opportunity is open to anyone willing to look death in the face.

[11] A perfect instance is the recent California Initiative. It proposed amending the name of the existing California statute from "Natural Death Act" to "Humane and Dignified Death Act," but its only substantive change was to declare and provide for "the right of the terminally ill to voluntary, humane, and *dignified* doctor-assisted *aid-in dying*," "aid in dying" meaning "any medical procedure that will terminate the life of the qualified patient swiftly, painlessly, and humanely." A (merely) natural death is to be made "dignified" simply by having it deliberately produced by (dignified) doctors.

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technical decisions—about respirators and antibiotics and feeding tubes and, yes, even poison—be made, precisely in order to uphold human dignity and the sanctity of life that you say are so intermingled?" A fair question: I offer the following outline of an answer.

About treatment for the actually dying, there is in principle no difficulty. In my book, *Toward a More Natural Science,* I have argued for the primacy of easing pain and suffering, along with supporting and comforting speech, and, more to the point, the need to draw back from some efforts at prolongation of life that prolong or increase only the patient's pain, discomfort, and suffering. Although I am mindful of the dangers and aware of the impossibility of writing explicit rules for ceasing treatment—hence the need for prudence—considerations of the individual's health, activity, and state of mind must enter into decisions of *whether* and *how vigorously* to treat if the decision is indeed to be for the patient's good. Ceasing treatment and allowing death to occur when (and if) it will, can, under some circumstances, be quite compatible with the respect that life itself commands for itself. For life can be revered not only in its preservation, but also in the manner in which we allow a given life to reach its terminus.

WHAT about so-called active euthanasia, the direct making dead of someone who is not yet dying or not dying "fast enough"? Elsewhere I have argued at great length against the practice of euthanasia *by physicians,* partly on the grounds of bad social consequences, but mainly on the grounds that killing patients—even those who ask for death—violates the inner meaning of the art of healing.[12] Powerful prudential arguments—unanswerable, in my view—have been advanced as to why legalized mercy killing would be a disastrous social policy, at least for the United States. But some will insist that social policy cannot remain deaf to cries for human dignity, and that dangers must be run to preserve a dignified death through euthanasia, at least where it is requested. As our theme here is dignity and sanctity, I will confine my answer to the question of euthanasia and human dignity.

Let us begin with voluntary euthanasia—the request for assistance in dying. To repeat: the claim here is that the choice for death, because a free act, affirms the dignity of free will against dumb necessity. Or, using my earlier formulation, is it not precisely dignified for the "god-like" to put a voluntary end to the humiliation of that very godliness?

In response, let me start with the following questions. Do the people who are actually contemplating euthanasia *for themselves*—as opposed to their proxies who lead the euthanasia movement—generally put their requests in these terms? Or are they not rather looking for a way to end their troubles and pains? One can *sympathize* with such a motive, out of compassion, but can one admire it, out of respect? Is it really *dignified* to seek to escape from troubles for oneself? Is there, to repeat, not more dignity in courage than in its absence?

Euthanasia for one's own dignity is, at best, paradoxical, even self-contradictory: how can I honor myself by making myself nothing? Even if dignity were to consist solely in autonomy, is it not an embarrassment to claim that autonomy reaches its zenith precisely as it disappears? Voluntary euthanasia, in the name of *positive* dignity, does not make sense.

Acknowledging the paradox, some will still argue the cause of freedom on a more narrow ground: the prospect of euthanasia increases human freedom by increasing options. It is, of course, a long theoretical question whether human freedom is best understood—and best served—through the increase of possibilities. But as a practical matter, in the *present* case, I am certain that this view is mistaken On the contrary, the opening up of this "option" of assisted suicide will greatly constrain human choice. For the choice for death is not one option among many, but an option to end all options. Socially, there will be great pressure on the aged and the vulnerable to exercise this option. Once there looms the legal alternative of euthanasia, it will plague and burden every decision made by any seriously ill elderly person—not to speak of their more powerful caretakers—even without the subtle hints and pressures applied to them by others.

And, thinking about others, is it dignified to ask or demand that someone else become my killer? It may be sad that one is unable to end one's own life, but can it conduce to either party's dignity to make the request? Consider its double meaning if made to a son or daughter: Do you love me so little as to force me to live on? Do you love me so little as to want me dead? What person in full possession of his own dignity would inflict such a duty on anyone he loved?

Of course, the whole thing could be made impersonal. No requests to family members, only to physicians. But precisely the same point applies: how can one demand care and humanity from one's physician, and, at the same time, demand that he play the role of technical dispenser of death? To turn the matter over to non-physicians, that is, to technically-competent professional euthanizers, is, of course, completely to dehumanize the matter.[13]

Proponents of euthanasia do not understand human dignity, which, at best, they confuse with

[12] "Neither for Love nor Money: Why Doctors Must Not Kill," *Public Interest,* Winter 1989, pp. 25-46.

[13] For a chilling picture of the fully rationalized and technically managed death, see the account of the Park Lane Hospital for the Dying in Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World.*

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humaneness. One of their favorite arguments proves this point: why, they say, do we put animals out of their misery but insist on compelling fellow human beings to suffer to the bitter end? Why, if it is not a contradiction for the veterinarian, does the medical ethic absolutely rule out mercy killing? Is this not simply inhumane?

Perhaps inhumane, but not thereby inhuman. On the contrary, it is precisely because animals are not human that we must treat them (merely) humanely. We put dumb animals to sleep because they do not know that they are dying, because they can make nothing of their misery or mortality, and, therefore, because they cannot live deliberately—i.e., humanly—in the face of their own suffering or dying. They cannot live out a fitting end. Compassion for their weakness and dumbness is our only appropriate emotion, and given our responsibility for their care and well-being, we do the only humane thing we can. But when a conscious human being asks us for death, by that very action he displays the presence of something that precludes our regarding him as a dumb animal. Humanity is owed humanity, not humaneness. Humanity is owed the bolstering of the human, even or especially in its dying moments, in resistance to the temptation to ignore its presence in the sight of suffering.

What humanity needs most in the face of evils is courage, the ability to stand against fear and pain and thoughts of nothingness. The deaths we most admire are those of people who, knowing that they are dying, face the fact frontally and act accordingly: they set their affairs in order, they arrange what could be final meetings with their loved ones, and yet, with strength of soul and a small reservoir of hope, they continue to live and work and love as much as they can for as long as they can. Because such conclusions of life require courage, they call for our encouragement—and for the many small speeches and deeds that shore up the human spirit against despair and defeat.

And what of non-voluntary euthanasia, for those too disabled to request it for themselves—the comatose, the senile, the psychotic: can this be said to be in the service of *their* human dignity? If dignity is, as the autonomy people say, tied crucially to consciousness and will, non-voluntary or "proxy-voluntary" euthanasia can never be a dignified act for the one euthanized. Indeed, it is precisely the absence of dignified humanity that invites the thought of active euthanasia in the first place.

Is it really true that such people are beneath all human dignity? I suppose it depends on the particulars. Many people in greatly reduced states still retain clear, even if partial, participation in human relations. They may respond to kind words or familiar music; they may keep up pride in their appearance or in the achievements of the grandchildren; they may take pleasure in reminiscences or simply in having someone who cares enough to be present; conversely, they may be irritated or hurt or sad, even appropriately so; and, even nearer bottom, they may be able to return a smile or a glance in response to a drink of water or a change of bedding or a bath. Because we really do not know their inner life—what they feel and understand—we run the risk of robbing them of opportunities for dignity by treating them as if they had none. It does not follow from the fact that *we* would never willingly trade places with them that *they* have *nothing* left worth respecting.

But what, finally, about the very bottom of the line, say, people in a "persistent vegetative state," unresponsive, contorted, with no evident ability to interact with the environment? What human dignity remains here? Why should we not treat such human beings as we (properly) treat dumb animals, and put them out of "their misery"[14]? I grant that one faces here the hardest case for the argument I am advancing. Yet one probably cannot be absolutely sure, even here, about the complete absence of inner life or awareness of their surroundings. In some cases, admittedly extremely rare, persons recover from profound coma (even with flat EEG); and they sometimes report having had partial yet vivid awareness of what was said and done to them, though they had given no external evidence of same. But beyond any restraint owing to ignorance, I would also myself be restrained by the human form, by *human blood,* and by what I owe to the full human life that this particular instance of humanity once lived. I would gladly stand aside and let die, say in the advent of pneumonia; I would do little beyond the minimum to sustain life; but I would not countenance the giving of lethal injections or the taking of other actions deliberately intending the patient's death. Between only undignified courses of action, this strikes me as the least undignified—especially for myself.

I have no illusions that it is easy to live with a Karen Ann Quinlan or a Nancy Cruzan or the baby Linares. I think I sufficiently appreciate the anguish of their parents or their children, and the distortion of their lives and the lives of their families. I also know that, when hearts break and people can stand it no longer, mercy killing will happen, and I think we should be prepared to excuse it—as we generally do—when it occurs in this way. But an excuse is not yet a justification, and very far from dignity.

[14] Once again we should be careful about our speech. It may be a great source of misery for *us* to see them in this state, but it is not at all clear that *they feel* or *have* misery. Precisely the ground for considering them beneath the human threshold is that nothing registers with them. This point is relevant to the "termination-of-feeding" cases, in which it is argued (in self-contradiction) that death by starvation is both humane and not in these instances cruel: someone who is too far gone to suffer from a death-by-starvation is, to begin with, not suffering at all.

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What then should we conclude, as a matter of social policy? We should reject the counsel of those who, seeking to drive a wedge between human dignity and the sanctity of life, argue the need for active euthanasia, especially in the name of death with dignity. For it is precisely the setting of fixed limits on violating human life that makes possible our efforts at dignified relations with our fellow men, especially when their neediness and disability try our patience. We will never be able to relate even decently to people if we are entitled always to consider that one option before us is to make them dead. Thus, when the advocates for euthanasia press us with the most heart-rending cases, we should be sympathetic but firm. Our response should be neither "Yes, for mercy's sake," nor "Murder! Unthinkable!" but "Sorry. No." Above all we must not allow ourselves to become self-deceived: we must never seek to relieve *our own* frustrations and bitterness over the lingering deaths of others by pretending that we can kill them to sustain *their dignity.*

Coda

THE ancient Greeks knew about hubris and its tragic fate. We modern rationalists do not. We do not yet understand that the project for the conquest of death leads only to dehumanization, that any attempt to gain the tree of life by means of the tree of knowledge leads inevitably also to the hemlock, and that the utter rationalization of life under the banner of the will gives rise to a world in which the victors live long enough to finish life demented and without choice. The human curse is to discover only too late the evils latent in acquiring the goods we wish for.

Against the background of enormous medical success, terminal illness and incurable disease appear as failures and as affronts to human pride. We refuse to be caught resourceless. Thus, having adopted a largely technical approach to human life and having medicalized so much of the end of life, we now are willing to contemplate a final technical solution for the evil of human finitude and for our own technical (but unavoidable) "failure," as well as for the degradations of life that are the unintended consequences of our technical successes. This is dangerous folly. People who care for autonomy and human dignity should try rather to reverse this dehumanization of the last stages of life, instead of giving dehumanization its final triumph by welcoming the desperate goodbye-to-all-that contained in one final plea for poison.

The present crisis that leads some to press for active euthanasia is really an opportunity to learn the limits of the medicalization of life and death and to recover an appreciation of living with and against mortality. It is an opportunity to remember and affirm that there remains a residual human wholeness—however precarious—that can be cared for even in the face of incurable and terminal illness. Should we cave in, should we choose to become technical dispensers of death, we will not only be abandoning our loved ones and our duty to care; we will exacerbate the worst tendencies of modern life, embracing technicism and so-called humaneness where encouragement and humanity are both required and sorely lacking. On the other hand, should we hold fast, should we decline "the ethics of choice" and its deadly options, should we learn that finitude is no disgrace and that human dignity can be cared for to the very end, we may yet be able to stem the rising tide that threatens permanently to submerge the best hopes for human dignity.

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The Sad Story of the Boy Wonder

Joseph Epstein

By the time I first met Robert Maynard Hutchins, in 1966, he was sixty-seven years old and, I now realize, intellectually quite dead. He carried around, however, a splendid corpse. "Presence" was the word then often applied to Hutchins. When he walked into a room—even a large, high-ceilinged, noisy room—everyone noticed; any room he sat in, he seemed to dominate. He was tall (nearly 6′3″), naturally slender, and had what used to be called a fine bearing. He wore clothes well, without seeming to care much about them. (In 1949, the American Tailors Guild, citing his "learned look," voted him third on its list of best-dressed men.) His hair was full and wavy and white; the bones in his face were strong but refined. When I knew him, the feature that seemed primary was his mouth: it smiled rarely, and then usually wryly, and laughed almost never—a mouth that was a touch prim and slightly disapproving.

I was twenty-nine and very much in awe of Robert Hutchins, who had left the chancellorship of the University of Chicago in 1950, or five years before I came there as a student. But I always felt that the aspects of the university I most appreciated were owing to Hutchins's twenty-one-year tenure as its head. When I was a student at Chicago, Hutchins was a name that could put an end to friendly parties or enliven dull ones—no one, on the subject of Robert Hutchins, was neutral. There were those who felt that his were years of divisiveness, distraction, and general decay. Lawrence A. Kimpton, who succeeded him as chancellor, remarked that nothing Hutchins did at the university "had any degree of permanence, except for the financial headaches, the neighborhood deterioration, and the faculty embitterment." But then there were such men as Edward Levi, himself later president of the university, who not merely admired but loved Robert Hutchins for his high-mindedness and for his courage in acting always in consonance with his ideals.

The context for my meeting Hutchins was that I had recently been hired as a senior editor at Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., where he was chairman of the board of editors. Hutchins's connection with Britannica was a lengthy one, beginning back in the 1940's, when General Robert E. Wood of Sears, Roebuck transferred the Britannica Corporation to William Benton, Hutchins's classmate at Yale, in a complicated arrangement that paid out a handsome royalty to the University of Chicago. For a time Benton, who had made an early fortune in advertising (the Benton & Bowles agency was his and his fellow Yalie Chester Bowles's), worked for Hutchins at the university as a vice president for public relations; but Hutchins would work for Benton for much longer, and eventually become his stipendiary. Neither greedy nor even greatly money-minded, Hutchins, accustomed as a young man to going first-class, lived as if perfectly unaware that any other class was possible. "If you have to look at the meter," was one of his well-known sayings, "don't take cabs." Past the age of twenty-five he probably never paid for a cab out of his own pocket.

Neither of us paid for lunch that day, which was at the Tavern Club, a block or so south of the Britannica offices across the Chicago River on Michigan Avenue. Seven or eight Britannica editors were at that lunch, with Mortimer J. Adler at the head of the table as our ostensible host. I was seated to Hutchins's left. Everyone tried to steer the conversation around toward him, almost as if we felt under an obligation not to let Robert Hutchins grow any more bored than he already appeared to be, though it was clear there was little any of us could do to prevent it. At one point he leaned toward me and, remarking that he understood I had gone to the University of Chicago, asked, "Have they brought football back yet?" I assumed he was joking. "Not the last I heard," I said, and asked if he had much occasion to visit the university. "Never," he said, with the kind of finality with which a man might answer a question about whether he still saw an old mistress or ex-wife. I recall wanting to break in to tell him that attending the university had been the crucial intellectual event of my life, but then he did not seem the sort of man to whom one blurted out such avowals. After lunch, waiting for the elevator, he stood posture perfect in a charcoal gray suit, red vest, and black knit tie, raincoat

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draped over one arm, a cigarette in hand, looking like a more handsome version of the actor Conrad Nagel, a man with only the simulacra of responsibilities whose real life, or so it seemed to me, was essentially finished.

Jobs that other men should have felt pleased to have achieved at the culmination of their careers, Robert Hutchins had as a young man—by current reckoning, as hardly more than a boy. In 1927, at the age of twenty-eight, he was appointed dean of the Yale Law School; in 1929, at the age of thirty, he was made president of the University of Chicago. To be considered promising is one thing; to have one's promise so quickly acknowledged and rewarded, quite something else again. Edith Wharton, in *A Backward Glance,* remarks upon her own good fortune as an artist in never having been ever considered promising, since many of the most brilliant young men of her generation, weighed down by the pressure of their promise, petered out quickly. Robert Hutchins's own youthful promise seems not in any way to have daunted him. He appears to have reacted much as did the young Otto von Bismarck, who, upon receiving a very delicate diplomatic mission in his early twenties, is supposed to have declared: "What is being asked of me is clear. Whether I have the talent and understanding sufficient to accomplish the task is God's affair."

How it came about that Hutchins was offered such jobs so early has long been something of a mystery, at least to me. That mystery has now been cleared up by a full-scale biography, *Unseasonable Truths: A Life of Robert Maynard Hutchins* by Harry S. Ashmore,* a friend and, in his last few decades, close colleague of Hutchins. Ashmore's biography sets out to be definitive, which, factually, it probably comes close to being. It is, however, something less than that psychologically. As befits the portrait of one friend by another, Ashmore has told the truth but not the whole truth. He does not probe into areas where his subject might be vulnerable, he tends to eschew motive when dubious behavior calls for interpretation, he everywhere gives his subject the benefit of the doubt, and he operates on the assumption that Robert Hutchins was a great man, instead of a greatly interesting one.

Unseasonable Truths is also somewhat skewed by the fact that Ashmore first came to know Hutchins after his glory days were done. The editor of the Arkansas *Gazette,* for which he helped win a Pulitzer Prize during the Little Rock desegregation crisis, Ashmore was first impressed into the Hutchins crew as a board member of the Fund for the Republic, of which Hutchins was president, in 1954. He went on to work at the Encyclopaedia Britannica and at the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions (where, for a time, he was also president). Ashmore, then, knew Hutchins during the period in his life when he, Hutchins, was learning the bitter lesson that the world would be recalcitrant to all his efforts to reshape it. Ashmore tends to see these as years of noble experiment, bold engagement, impressive idealism. He does not allow that to an outsider they might seem one vast stretch of misbegotten ideas, high self-delusion, ridiculous waste, and immitigable sadness.

CERTAINLY, it did not begin that way. It began as if Robert Hutchins were assembling America's perfect résumé, one that would perhaps culminate in a final entry of Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, or possibly President of the United States. Hutchins never made the vulgar and silly error of starting at the bottom or even at the middle. He was well-born, as these things are reckoned by genealogy, with family members on both sides going back to settlement in New England in the late 1600's. Like many among his notable contemporaries—E.E. Cummings, Henry Luce, and Norman Thomas come to mind—Robert Hutchins was the son of a minister. Reverend William Hutchins was a Presbyterian with a congregation in Brooklyn when Robert was born. Reverend Hutchins later became a professor at Oberlin Theological Seminary in Ohio and, after that, president of Berea College in Kentucky. The Hutchinses were a family in which puritan notions of public service and academic achievement were much-honored traditions.

Hutchins was himself always an excellent student, but, one gathers, of the quick-study kind: quick to grasp, quick to execute, quick to move on. Apparently he was naturally gifted at things of the mind; he was good at acquiring foreign languages, and in later life wrote a clear, impressively concise, confident prose. Even fellow students who did not like him—an element of arrogance, or at any rate of seeming arrogance, put many people off Hutchins all his life—had to respect him because he was so obviously smart. Both at Oberlin College, where he began his undergraduate education, and at Yale, where in 1919 he picked up again in his junior year after serving with the U.S. Ambulance Service assigned to the Italian army toward the close of World War I, Hutchins breezed by. Highly intelligent, supremely self-confident, "collar-ad handsome" (in Harry Ashmore's phrase), Hutchins, despite having rather less money than many of his classmates, nonetheless was a great success at Yale.

Certainly Yale posed no academic problem for Hutchins, unless it was boredom. But then boredom was one of the perennial Hutchins problems. The ambulance corps in Italy had presented vast stretches of boredom, undergraduate study at Yale meant boredom, much of the work of a university president would spell boredom, and boredom after his years at Chicago seemed to cling to him like

* Little, Brown, 616 pp., $27.50.

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a bad case of dandruff. Like dandruff, Hutchins's boredom was palpable during these meetings I sat in with him at Encyclopaedia Britannica in Chicago. I recall one in particular in which Mortimer J. Adler, speaking with the stammer caused by a racing mind, set out eleven arguments in favor of a policy for which he desired Hutchins's consent. Hutchins stared down into the bowl of his Dunhill until Adler had finished, then removed the pipe from his teeth, announced, "I do not consider that an adequate statement of the alternatives," replaced the pipe, and mentally floated off to God knows where.

Boredom with undergraduate study caused Hutchins in his senior year to leave Yale College and enroll in the law school. Law was the one thing that did not bore him, or so for a while it appeared. It was at law school, he would later maintain, that his education, at the age of twenty-one, finally began. "It is sad but true," he subsequently wrote, "that the only place in an American university where the student is taught to read, write, and speak is the law school." Although he left Yale Law to teach at a private school for a year, when he returned—as a student holding down a full-time job as secretary of the Yale Corporation—he finished top of his class and second on the state bar examination. As the law school's most brilliant graduate, he was offered a job on the faculty, which, in 1925 at the age of twenty-six, he accepted.

Four years earlier Hutchins had married a tall, striking young woman of his own social and economic position—long on genealogical lines, short on cash—named Maude Phelps McVeigh. She was of artistic temperament, a sculptor and later a novelist good enough to be published by New Directions in her day but no longer, I can testify, very readable in ours. They were a dazzling couple, Bob and Maude, something out of F. Scott Fitzgerald; unfortunately, out of *Tender is the Night* more than any other novel, for Maude Hutchins was to undergo nervous breakdowns and to bring her husband much domestic grief and not a little public embarrassment, at one point obliging him to vacate the capacious president's house at the University of Chicago and hide out in various downtown hotels while running the university's affairs from an office in the Loop. Like T.S. Eliot, who also encountered long periods of misery with his first wife, Hutchins, after a difficult divorce, perhaps seeking stability, married his secretary. But then misery in marriage is not something that tends to be factored in when a man's classmates vote him, as his at Yale voted Hutchins, "most likely to succeed."

Hutchins might more accurately have been voted "most quickly to succeed." At the Yale Law School he took only two years to rise from instructor to associate professor. He taught evidence, and soon became a strong critic of established views of the subject. He was one of those professors, Felix Frankfurter of Harvard most prominent among them, who protested the handling of evidence at the trial of Sacco and Vanzetti. When the then-dean of the school left to take up a judgeship on the U.S. Court of Appeals, and the faculty could not decide on either of the two leading candidates for his replacement, Hutchins emerged as a compromise candidate. More pertinently, he was supported for the job by the president of Yale, James Rowland Angell, who not only admired his earlier work as secretary of the Yale Corporation but, as a former academic psychologist, agreed with Hutchins on the need to bring the findings of contemporary social science into the study of law.

Hutchins was appointed full professor and for two short terms was called acting dean, after which the "acting" was dropped from the title. In the event, he turned out to be an excellent dean. He broke the logjam of retrograde tradition which had kept the law school from being first-rate. He altered the curriculum so that a principled understanding of the law along with a mechanical one was taught. He opened enrollment policy, so that family pedigree was no longer the primary consideration for acceptance. He enlarged the faculty, making a number of interesting appointments, among them Jews. In a very short while he had begun to transform a dull institution into an impressively lively one, and in doing so he found himself, as Harry Ashmore writes, "accorded a place in the very front rank of American educators."

As at the Yale Law School, so at the University of Chicago, Hutchins at the outset was not in the running when Max Mason retired from the presidency of the university to become president of the Rockefeller Foundation. The university's search committee came up with a list of no fewer than fifty-six names, and that of Robert Hutchins was not on it. But once again a split among factions made it possible for him eventually to be offered the job. One faction on the faculty was worried lest a new president turn Chicago, which was from its beginnings a great research university with an emphasis on graduate study, into something more collegiate, on the model of Princeton or Yale. Others wanted undergraduate study to be given more attention. Still others felt that Chicago was beginning to lose its experimental air and so wanted someone who could restore the school's intellectual excitement. Given so many cross-purposes, interlaced with such elevated aspirations, many candidates were soon weeded out.

At this point Robert Hutchins, younger than many assistant professors on the Chicago faculty, began to be seriously considered. In some quarters his youthfulness worked against him. President Angell of Yale, the same man who had supported Hutchins for the law-school deanship, wrote to

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say that he was still five or ten years shy of the maturity required for the presidency of a major university, arguing that he had no acquaintance with general educational problems and tended to be intolerant of people who disagreed with him. On the other side, Hutchins's youth was his great selling point. A powerful trustee named Edwin Embree, president of the Julius Rosenwald Fund, expressed concern lest the university settle into solid respectable mediocrity, and registered the opinion that Hutchins possessed precisely the "youth, imagination, and courage" Chicago needed to lead it back to its great days under William Rainey Harper. After all, Harper had himself been only thirty-five when, with large injections of Rockefeller money, he became the first president of the University of Chicago in 1891. In a final series of interviews with trustees and senior faculty, Hutchins, with his charm, forthrightness, and suave confidence, must have blown away any further possible objections to his candidacy. In April 1929 he was offered the job. The career of "the boy wonder" of American higher education had begun in earnest.

A little jump in standard of living went along with the new job. The Hutchinses now had five live-in servants, among them a butler, a cook, maids, and a nurse for their young daughter, not to mention a gardener and a chauffeur. The presidential mansion was refurbished for them, with a sculpture studio especially built for Maude. Handsome allowances for travel and entertainment made it unnecessary for Hutchins to go very deep into his annual salary of $25,000. The Hutchinses summered with the John D. Rockefeller, Jrs. in Seal Harbor; during the regular university year they were courted by such trustees as Harold Swift, the heir to the meat-packing fortune, who loved the university, and by the rich of Chicago with cultural pretensions. In recounting these details, Harry Ashmore paraphrases Robert Hutchins's quip about resembling the man who had no desire to be a millionaire, merely to live like one. Like many a good joke, this one was at bottom serious. Hutchins seems never to have cared greatly about money; but prosperity, as they will tell you at your local race track, takes little getting used to, and henceforth Hutchins never lived other than as well as possible.

In its standard version, the myth of Robert Hutchins at Chicago has it that a young and idealistic president in fairly short order turned a respectable but rather staid university into a toweringly great institution. He was able to achieve this in large part through the personal magnetism of the visionary, for Hutchins was nothing if not a man with a steady vision of the course higher education ought to take in the modern world. Hutchins was also the last of the strong university presidents, in the line and tradition of Charles W. Eliot of Harvard, Daniel Coit Gilman of Johns Hopkins, Nicholas Murray Butler of Columbia, an educational innovator, reformer, leader. He made enemies, to be sure, but he also changed the character of higher education, not only at his own institution but nationally, with results that continue to reverberate into our own time. Such, as I say, is the standard version of the myth.

In fact, when Hutchins arrived at Chicago in the autumn of 1929, the school, though it lacked the social cachet of Harvard, Yale, or Princeton, was probably, department by department, the most intellectually impressive university in the United States. It had been first-class right from the outset, an achievement owing to two factors. The first was William Rainey Harper, a shrewd judge of scholarly talent with a clear sense of what he wanted—namely, a research institution centered on graduate study and modeled on the German university. The second was the money of John D. Rockefeller, Sr., who backed Harper all the way and provided a model of selfless munificence. The combination of Harper's energy and imagination and Rockefeller's money built a great university faster than it had ever been done before or is likely ever to be done again.

Harper was said to have been a brilliant teacher, and in his original plan for the university he did not scant undergraduate instruction. After his death in 1907, however, the teaching of undergraduates received less and less attention. When Hutchins arrived, he apparently decided it was here that he could best make his own impress. But there was this decisive difference between Harper and Hutchins: the former was a scholar who knew that the soul of a great university is in scholarship, while the latter was at best someone for whom the world of scholarship was, if not alien, then certainly foreign territory.

There is a story Harry Ashmore does not mention about the young Bob Hutchins. While a junior professor at Yale, he was in contention for a Rockefeller Foundation fellowship that would allow him to undertake two years of independent study wherever and with whomever he wished. When Hutchins learned he was to be made dean of the Yale Law School, he removed his name as a potential candidate for this fellowship. Years later, Hutchins told the historian Abraham Flexner that if he had accepted the fellowship he would never have been made president of the University of Chicago. "Maybe not," Flexner is said to have replied, "but you would have been prepared to be."

"The Young Rush In" is the title Mortimer J. Adler gives to the chapter in his autobiography in which he recounts Robert Hutchins's and his own first year at Chicago. Adler was three years younger than Hutchins; they first met when Hutchins was at Yale, and shortly after accepting the presidency of Chicago Hutchins was able to arrange a three-year contract for Adler as associate

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professor of philosophy. Straightaway the two men became identified as speaking with one voice. We are talking here about a very odd couple indeed. No Don Quixote ever had a less practical Sancho Panza at his side than Robert Hutchins had in Mortimer Adler. By his own admission, Adler was even less experienced in academic politics than Hutchins and (in Adler's words) "equally, if not more, impetuous and impatient."

The relationship of Hutchins and Adler was a peculiar and fateful one, and through various joint projects—among them, Encyclopaedia Britannica and The Great Books of the Western World—would last the rest of Hutchins's life. Adler was not a mentor but rather more like an intellectual coach. He was better educated than Hutchins, and an even quicker study. Socially and in every other way, however, Hutchins was the dominant and superior figure. On the several occasions when I saw the two men together—they were then both in their sixties—the deference all went one way. Adler treated Hutchins with reverence, Hutchins, it seemed to me, treated Adler with an ever so slightly amused condescension. (Hutchins's only true confidant was Thornton Wilder, the novelist and playwright, his classmate at Oberlin and later at Yale, whose background—Protestant, ministerial, intellectual, and puritanical—was similar to his own.) But Hutchins's and Adler's earlier years together must have been more in the nature of an intellectual, if not a spiritual, partnership.

In their first year at Chicago, Hutchins and Adler were like two Quiz Kids run amok. Earlier, Hutchins had confessed to Adler that, before becoming president of a major university, he had never given much thought to the subject of education. Adler allowed that he hadn't, either. Yet each young man, in his own self-assured way, felt that no subject could elude his own extraordinary ratiocinative powers. Together they nicely illustrated the limitations of having a powerful IQ with nothing in the way of subtlety, experience, or humility to go along with it.

Right off Adler made plain his contempt for the pragmatic, Deweyan tendency of the university's philosophy department, and for the intellectual quality of the senior men who staffed it, and word of this quickly got back to them. Adler next wrote a series of memoranda on what he took to be the fallacious assumptions of the social sciences—then as now, *la spécialité de la maison* at the University of Chicago—and formulated his findings in an address before the local Social Science Research Council. The first sentence Adleresquely ran: "Current research programs in the social sciences are misdirected and methodologically ill-advised because of erroneous conceptions of the nature of science which comprise the 'raw empiricism' characteristic of contemporary social science." At lunch at the faculty club with a number of members of the physics department, Adler remarked that electrons, if Niels Bohr were correct, acted just as angels did, if Thomas Aquinas were correct. ("Should auld Aquinas be forgot" was a favorite Hutchins pun.) This, as you might imagine, put him in solid with the scientists at the university. And the winter quarter wasn't even over yet.

Before it was, three members of the philosophy department had threatened to resign over an attempt by Hutchins to get three youngish men of Adler's choosing evaluated along with the candidates being offered jobs by the department itself. Hutchins eventually had to back down, and he found himself saddled with legislation that henceforth restricted his hand in making faculty appointments. He also had to stand by while his friend Adler was bounced out of the philosophy department, with nothing for it but for Hutchins to make him an associate professor in the law school.

Hutchins's own cavalier style did not help smooth the way. Although he was quite good at raising funds, he used to keep a sign in his desk, brought out to be displayed among friends, that read, "We Launder Dirty Money." A sign atop his desk read, "Don't tell the president what he already knows." Lengthy memoranda from faculty or administrators would frequently meet with replies of a single sentence or even a single word. (Harry Ashmore quotes a colleague, Giuseppe Borgese, amusingly complaining that Hutchins's terse style refused to recognize the "voluptuous role of the paragraph.") Certain jobs, and one might think university presidencies among them, call for the abandonment of irony, but Hutchins refused to abandon his, and his quips and cutting remarks tended to get around. Laird Bell, one of the lawyers representing the university in the famous Walgreen case in the middle 1930's, when the university was charged with subversive teaching, is supposed to have said to Hutchins on their way into a hearing, "I'll give the university a hundred dollars for every wisecrack you don't make."

Such behavior set the stage for one of the great, prolonged pseudo-events in the intellectual history of the University of Chicago: what has since come to be known as the Chicago Fight. This broke out in earnest in 1934 when Hutchins delivered an address, entitled "The New Atlantis," arguing that contemporary higher education, however scientific its pretensions, was at its core anti-intellectual. Driven by the need to acquire ever new facts, such education was entirely devoid of general propositions which might subsume and lend order to those facts. Worse yet, Hutchins reported:

> There are no principles. The world is a flux of events. We cannot hope to understand it. All we can do is to watch it. This is the conclusion

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of the leading anti-intellectuals of our time, William James and John Dewey.

The Chicago Fight has been variously described as a battle between facts and ideas, between Deweyan empiricism and Aristotelian-Thomist metaphysics, between sheer belligerence and utter benightedness. For nearly half a decade it kept the university in a state of high agitation. After Hutchins's speech, Adler jumped in with a number of lectures of his own; and a Mortimer J. Adler lecture could get things to the stage of rancor faster than a divorce lawyer. Debates were held, editorials written, friendships broken. Lined up against Hutchins and Adler and their followers were a number of key figures in social science, among them Louis Wirth, Harry Gideonse, and the brilliant economist, Frank Knight. Many wild things were said on both sides, and Hutchins was never to get quite free of the taint of Thomism while he remained at Chicago. But what made the whole thing a pseudo-event, as Edward Shils, who was on the scene, has pointed out, was that it had scarcely any effect on the true life of the university. While Hutchins and Adler were arguing away against the emptiness of science and social science that proceeded without metaphysical underpinnings, precisely those two spheres of intellectual activity went on adding to the already great prestige of the University of Chicago, and continue to do so even to this day.

Insofar as Hutchins's antagonism toward academic specialization, his insistence on the formulation of the principles underlying knowledge, and his distaste for the "pastlessness" of empirical science and social science helped to shape actual education at Chicago, they did so in his reform of the undergraduate College. Hutchins always felt that these reforms did not go far enough, and in fact his ideas, such as they were, were later put into purer form at St. John's College in Annapolis. But what Hutchins achieved at Chicago was impressively radical for its day.

Many aspects of Hutchins's reforms were of administrative interest only; and some were almost immediately abandoned by his successor, Lawrence Kimpton. Notable among them was the decision to allow bright high-school students to enter the College at the end of their sophomore year, thus beginning their higher education at roughly fifteen. This particular innovation opened the way for A.J. Liebling, in *The Second City*, to remark that "the University of Chicago's undergraduate college acts as the greatest magnet for neurotic juveniles since the Children's Crusade, with Robert Maynard Hutchins . . . playing the role of Stephen the Shepherd Boy in the revival."

At the heart of undergraduate reform at Chicago was what we should today call a core curriculum, except that the College's was a fixed and serious one, and not merely a blatant attempt to placate touchy minorities. The College simply offered a number of survey courses with such boring titles as Humanities I, II, & III, Social Sciences I, II, & III, Natural Sciences I, II, & III, and so forth, with very few variations. No textbooks were used in any of these courses, only original material: Thucydides and Condorcet and Freud, not accounts of Thucydides, Condorcet, and Freud written by professors at Southern Methodist University.

As for the quality of the education, it varied, as elsewhere, from teacher to teacher. I myself, when I entered the College five years after Robert Hutchins had left, found the reading and the general atmosphere much more impressive than anything that went on in the classrooms. As for the atmosphere, "Every queer and unusual student who disliked athletics and the normal outlets of young people was attracted to Hutchins's College," Lawrence Kimpton would later say. That is a bit strong, but, true enough, one's fellow students were a touch exotic. Certainly there was no type that the university produced as there was once a Princeton man or a Bennington girl. What they had in common was a certain breadth of intellectual ambition behind which lay, I believe, the figure of Robert Hutchins. His persistent putting-down of vocationalism in education and, by implication, his disdain for professionalism—some of which is set out in his book, *The Higher Learning in America*—found its more receptive audience among the undergraduates at his own university.

For all that Hutchins was wrong or even irrelevant about so much that was important in education, there was nonetheless a grandeur about him, and it was not a false grandeur, or something that could be chalked up, as we tend to do nowadays, to style or "image." His was bound by inner integrity. Hutchins was, for one thing, intellectually courageous, with nothing of the public-relations man about him; he almost always said what he thought and was prepared to take the fire for having done so. He was politically courageous, too, as witness his unflappable conduct during the Walgreen affair; he was sound on academic freedom, and protected those of his faculty whose political opinions rendered them vulnerable to outside pressure from congressional committees or anyone else. Nothing about Robert Hutchins was small, nothing mean or meaching. He was clearly cut out for great things.

Why, one wonders, did he not achieve them? If Robert Hutchins's spirit lingered over the University of Chicago long after he left it, his flesh longed to depart much earlier than it did. Hutchins himself used to say that ten years was just about the outer limit for someone to hold on to

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a university presidency, which would have made his own departure date 1940. But even before that date arrived, Hutchins, after his various intramural battles with Chicago faculty, was considering other jobs. Mortimer Adler had advised him to pack it in and take on the presidency of St. John's in Annapolis. But much larger, lusher fish were sighted. According to Harry Ashmore, Hutchins was offered the presidency of the New York Stock Exchange but turned it down. Harold Ickes, FDR's Secretary of the Interior, approached him not long afterward about the chairmanship of the National Recovery Administration, though this particular deal fell through. Hutchins later rejected the chairmanships of the Securities and Exchange Commission and the Federal Communications Commission, even though Roosevelt himself suggested that taking such jobs might place him among the candidates for the vice-presidential nomination on the 1940 Democratic ticket.

The job Robert Hutchins apparently truly wanted was a seat on the Supreme Court. But when the first of two such seats became available, it went to Hugo Black; the second went to Hutchins's longtime friend William O. Douglas. Roosevelt, evidently, never felt fully confident that Hutchins was, in the phrase of a political insider whom Ashmore quotes, "on 'our side.'" So the only job Hutchins really wanted and actually lobbied for, the one job he felt he could have rested content in, was simply not available to him.

In the time left him at Chicago, Hutchins still had lots of fireworks to shoot off, flares to send up, grenades to lob. To go from smaller to larger explosions, Hutchins arranged to drop football, and took Chicago out of the Big Ten: "Football has the same relation to education," he famously said, "that bullfighting has to agriculture." As the United States headed toward World War II, Hutchins found himself increasingly sympathetic to the isolationist position, though as a liberal he could never be an America Firster. Irony of ironies, it was to be the University of Chicago, led by this self-declared isolationist, that supplied the resources and facilities to Enrico Fermi, Leo Szilard, Harold Urey, and the other high-powered scientists who worked on what was then known as the Metallurgy Project but what all now know would eventually lead to the development of the atomic bomb. By the time the war was over, Harry Ashmore reports, Chicago "had handled a greater volume of military projects than any other single institution." What, one wonders, if Hutchins had been frankly in favor of the war?

With the end of the war, university life must have seemed even duller to Hutchins. He had the idea of forming the Committee on Social Thought, which, for better *and* worse, may be said to have been the origin of so-called interdisciplinary studies in higher education; it was also an excellent resort for extraordinary people who did not seem to fit comfortably in conventional academic niches. When called in on any important appointment—especially from among the German refugee scholars sent into exile by Hitler—his instincts tended to be sure and correct. He remained a powerful raiser of funds; he was always good with the rich, though not above making witticisms about them behind their backs. "The rich," he used to say, "have one thing in common: a short attention span. When you have that kind of money you don't have to listen."

As Hutchins came near his 20th anniversary as president of Chicago, his own work must have bored him blue. He had turned, as he told Mortimer Adler, from an educational administrator to an educational philosopher. His speeches, usually short, never sweet, generally laced with irony, began to be increasingly laden with those pronunciamentos of the snore-inducing kind in which, in our own day, university presidents have come to specialize: education for democracy, education for leisure, education for freedom. There is something particularly hopeless about such subjects, and Hutchins was too clever a man not to recognize it. A man so intellectually ruthless with everyone else could not have been easy on himself.

Hutchins was a notably efficient worker. He rose early, dealt tersely with his correspondence, speed-read his way through memoranda, proposals, and other university business documents, kept to a strict schedule with his daily round of meetings and interviews. He was said to have been able to compose and memorize a speech for perfect delivery in three or four hours. Harry Ashmore recounts a great many such details, but it is a failing of his biography that he tells us very little of Robert Hutchins's intellectual life. What books did he not speed but merely read? In what direction did his taste run in things of the mind? Did he like novels? (He wrote some faintly amusing light verse.) Did he read history? Did he read at all? When at one point the Committee on Social Thought, at the inspiration of the Chicago editor and publisher Henry Regnery, brought out a magazine entitled *Measure*, Hutchins served as chairman of its editorial board. Regnery recalls a meeting of the board at which manuscripts were passed out to board members, and someone handed Hutchins an essay on the law. "Why are you giving this to me?" Regnery remembers Hutchins saying. "I no longer know anything about the law. I don't know anything about anything."

When in 1950 Hutchins was offered the key associate directorship of the Ford Foundation, responsible for activities having to do with education and world peace, he took it without much hesitation, resigning officially from Chicago at the close of the 1951 spring term. In those days as in ours, apart from a career in the U.S. Senate or as a state governor, where else could a former president of a major university go

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but into a job at one of the richer foundations? The comforts are roughly the same, the aggravation is less, and the air of unreality likely to be even greater. Irving Kristol once told a young man about to take a foundation job that he would never eat another bad lunch and that no one would ever again tell him the truth. Hutchins made much the same point shortly after joining the Ford Foundation. "It's a nice job," he said. "You meet such interested people."

For the last twenty-six years of his life, Robert Hutchins lived chiefly in that world. Harry Ashmore devotes more than half his book to these years—to the skirmishes, power struggles, and shifting alignments within the institutions in which Hutchins worked—but in anything resembling solid achievement it all came to damnably little.

In time, Hutchins's job with the Ford Foundation turned into the presidency of the Ford-underwritten Fund for the Republic ("A wholly disowned subsidiary of the Ford Foundation," as he once described it); and then the Fund for the Republic gave way to the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions in Santa Barbara, California. Dwight Macdonald, in *The Ford Foundation: The Men and the Millions,* passes along the remark of an unnamed observer that Hutchins, with Ford money, was now trying to buy what, as president of the University of Chicago, he couldn't himself sell—namely, his old ideas about education.

It turned out that he couldn't buy them, either. Nor did he have much better luck with some of the other ideas he had acquired: the idea of world government, with its apparent need for endless drafts of a world constitution; the idea of the so-called "dialogue," stressing the importance of intellectual collaboration; and, as an offshoot of the latter, the great splashy international conferences, such as the *Pacem in Terris* affairs and others that he organized in Florence, at Wingspread, in Rome; and more of the same, sad, thin stuff—all of it talk talk talk, and so little of it good talk.

Liberal-Left though the general drift of Hutchins's thought tended to be, he was for the most part disdainful of the political movements of the middle and late 60's. The emotionalism of the counterculture and its crude Marxism, Harry Ashmore reports, put him off; the general coarseness of it all could not have helped. Not that he couldn't match the New Left at the level of the inflammatory, uninformed generalization, as in the following item: "All we can say of American education is that it's a colossal housing project designed to keep people out of worse places until they can go to work." But then Robert Hutchins's radicalism, as Ashmore wisely notes, was not, like that of the 60's young, rooted in fantasies of alienation; he had not given up on America and its institutions.

Nobody, however, was really listening to Hutchins during these years, except the stray millionaire he was able to get to pick up the tab for one of his conferences or to meet the expenses for the chat and buffet and salaries at the Center in Santa Barbara. He was never able to attract truly serious people permanently to the Center; despite everything the place offered in the way of luxury and the little it asked in the way of work, it must have resembled nothing so much as an endless talk show to which no one was tuned in. Hutchins had to settle for second- and third-rate academics and such occasional intellectual celebrity freaks as Alex Comfort (author of *The Joy of Sex*) and Bishop James Pike (who claimed to have been in touch with his dead son). He was loyal to all these people. One of the main patterns of his life was his persistent and enduring loyalty—to, as it seems to me, the wrong people. He died in 1977 worrying about what would become of the Center that in the end he knew was a flop. "Well," he wrote to his friend Thornton Wilder a few years before his death, "it was a great idea." But it was not even a good idea, not for a minute.

In the lives of the great, every turn, each unexpected twist, seems in retrospect the exactly right one. Accidents, setbacks, illnesses, unhappiness, family tragedy—all seem to conduce to the production of the masterworks, the grand discoveries, the saving of the nation. In the lives of the almost great who fail, the reverse seems to obtain. Every break, piece of good fortune, natural advantage conduces to the series of sad botches that end in ultimate failure. It was to Thornton Wilder that Hutchins wrote: "I was right to leave [the University of Chicago]; but I went to the wrong place [the Ford Foundation]." But any other place, one feels on reviewing his life, would have been the wrong place, every turn probably a mistake.

Had Hutchins been a mite less quick, less handsome, less lucky in his early years, might he not, given his natural superiority, have done something genuinely, breathtakingly extraordinary? Perhaps; perhaps not. Poor Hutchins. His life was of a kind to set one to composing apothegms about the sad fate of those whom the gods, with their well-known taste for irony, too heavily favor when young.

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Interpreting the Bible

Robert Alter

It is a revealing symptom of our cultural malaise that for two decades our academic institutions have been shaken by spasms of radical reevaluation of what we do with texts, ranging from uneasy self-doubt to incipient panic to the exhilaration of an intellectual witches' sabbath. At this moment, even as the star of deconstruction begins to fade in the constellations of academic fashions, there is a lingering consensus that texts are highly unstable objects of knowledge, covertly asserting something other than what they seem to be saying, and that interpreters ineluctably betray texts by translating them as they always must into their own conceptual frameworks, epistemological assumptions, and implicit ideological aims. An instructive sign of the times was a major symposium on textual glosses held at the University of California Humanities Research Institute at Irvine in 1988. There was virtual agreement among participants—leading classicists, medievalists, and Renaissance scholars, with Jacques Derrida as *de rigueur* respondent—that no comment on a text is ever innocent, that every act of exegesis or even ostensibly simple glossing is a means of intervening in the text, asserting power over it and over those who would use it.

Against this background, the publication of the first three volumes of an ambitious new commentary on the Pentateuch, sponsored by the Jewish Publication Society of America (JPS),* is a monument to the age of innocence of modern textual interpretation, which could be said to extend from the later 18th century until the mid-1960's. Innocence, however, does produce a kind of enabling procedural confidence in the act of explication, and all three commentaries actually demonstrate that there are aspects of the text which are susceptible to what we may still unblushingly call scientific investigation. At the same time, the commentaries raise a cluster of intriguing questions about what we can know about a text, especially an ancient text; about what it is useful to know, which may be quite another matter; and about the appropriate methods for undertaking the quest for knowledge.

Especially because I will later express some misgivings, let me say clearly at the outset that *The JPS Torah Commentary* is a scholarly achievement of a high order. It is probably the equal of the best volumes of the Anchor Bible that have appeared, and exceeds that series in the balance of perspectives and the fullness of elucidation it provides. (Two of the contributors, it should be noted, Baruch A. Levine and Jacob Milgrom, have also been working on volumes that will appear in the Anchor series.) Altogether, *The JPS Torah Commentary* should long remain an invaluable tool for anyone seeking to come to grips with the Pentateuch in all its knotty philological and historical particularities.

This is neither a denominational commentary nor one especially suitable for synagogue use, in contrast to W. Gunther Plaut's admirable *The Torah: A Modern Commentary* published a number of years ago by the Reform movement.† It is a synthesis of the best of serious modern biblical scholarship, which has come more and more to transcend the theological or didactic assumptions of its denominational origins. The Jewish character of the JPS commentary is most visible in its abundant incorporation of insights from the Midrash and the medieval Hebrew exegetes (a topic to which we shall return), but pride of place is still accorded to the revelations of archeology, comparative Semitic philology, ancient Near Eastern religions, and anthropology—all those trends in biblical research that I once designated as "excavative." In any case, the Jewish Publication Society clearly was impelled by a sense of forging a strong new link in the great chain of Jewish exegesis stretching back to late antiquity, as Nahum Sarna, general editor of the series, and Chaim Potok, its literary editor, stress in their manifesto.

In keeping with that perception of high pur-

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* *The JPS Torah Commentary, Genesis:* Commentary by Nahum M. Sarna, 414 pp., $47.50; *Leviticus:* Commentary by Baruch A. Levine, 284 pp., $47.50; *Numbers:* Commentary by Jacob Milgrom, 520 pp., $47.50.

† On the Plaut volume, see my article in these pages, "Reform Judaism and the Bible," February 1982.

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pose, the volumes have been sumptuously produced. The Hebrew text of the Leningrad Codex (the oldest dated manuscript of the entire Hebrew Bible), in handsome type, is printed in a parallel column alongside the text of the 1962 JPS translation of the Torah. The commentary, in smaller type below, stands in a ratio of roughly 5 or 6 to 1 to the Pentateuchal text. It includes not only glosses of terms and elucidations of difficulties but also observations on religious concepts, historical issues, compositional patterns, literary motifs, and much else. The biblical text is also broken down into small literary units with prefatory remarks about each unit often running to several paragraphs. Each book of the Torah is presented with an introductory essay, and the body of the commentary is followed by a section called "Excursuses"—that is, extended notes, typically a page or two in length, on topics that could not be dealt with adequately within the confines of the commentary proper.

This entire format obviously has been carefully conceived, and I have only two quibbles. Because the volumes run from right to left, with the Hebrew text, the double columns of endnote references to the commentary are a little confusing to follow, and I often had to look at least twice before locating the right notes for the right chapter. And though each contributor, as the editors inform us, was allowed the liberty of his own perspective, in Milgrom's use of excursuses the disproportion is bizarre—178 large, closely printed pages in comparison to 36 by Sarna and 40 by Levine. The result is that well over a third of Milgrom's volume is made up of what amounts to a small encyclopedia of biblical institutions and concepts. Much instructive matter is thereby conveyed, but one senses a palpable transgression of the strict purpose of commentary in the series as a whole.

It may be a coincidence that all three contributors have had an association with the Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS), the training institution of Conservative Judaism. Sarna taught there early in his career, and both Levine and Milgrom, though long based at universities, hold rabbinical degrees from JTS. (Sarna will also do Exodus for the series, while Deuteronomy has been assigned to Jeffrey Tigay of the University of Pennsylvania, a scholar with a background of expertise in ancient Near Eastern law and literature.) Levine and Milgrom were both students at JTS of the late H.L. Ginsberg, the great biblical philologist, and the productive traces of his work can be detected in both their commentaries.

EACH of the commentators has his own forte, and each seems nicely matched with the text he expounds. Milgrom on Numbers exhibits a special mastery of cultic intricacies, though he also intelligently addresses a wide variety of other issues, and the reader will learn from him all he is likely to want to know about how and why sacrificial blood is sprinkled on the altar, which orders of impurity are neutralized by which ritual gestures and substances, what numbers and kinds of animals are deemed appropriate for the sundry categories of offering. Levine on Leviticus is an accomplished Semitic philologist, and the discriminations he makes in the meanings of terms, their technical application, the semantic fields from which they have been drawn, turn his commentary into a sustained lesson in the precise understanding of biblical Hebrew. All three commentators exhibit an impressive ability to bring together a broad range of learning pertinent to the Bible, but Sarna on Genesis is the aptest synthesizer among them, and that gift, happily brought to bear on the richest narrative material in the Torah, makes his volume the outstanding one of the three. Much of this understanding may not be new to scholarly eyes, but Sarna performs a valuable service to the non-specialist in deftly bringing it all together. He offers a wealth of archeological and comparative-historical information on the place-names, the genealogies, the various indications of migration and conquest and cult-location in Genesis, and at the same time he has a keen eye for the unifying compositional strategies, the recurring motifs, even some of the nuances of psychological motivation of the narratives. He also exhibits a good deal of exegetical tact, that fine sense of knowing when to be expansive and when to be terse, or not to comment at all. There are occasional exceptions, though: the genealogies in Genesis, which have exerted immeasurably greater fascination on historians than on ordinary readers, are accorded a good deal more space, with patient cross-referencing to cuneiform literature and archeological digs, than the most humanly complex dramatic encounters in the Joseph story. The results of such inquiry are not illuminations but delectable curiosities, as when we are informed that the enigmatic Ashkenaz of Genesis 10:3, after which Central European Jewry took its name, is "doubtless identical with the Ashkuzai or Ishkuza of Assyrian texts" and designates the same Indo-European people that the Greeks called the Scythians.

There is no unanimity among the three JPS commentators (any more than there was among the various medieval Hebrew exegetes). Sarna and Milgrom, following the precedent of E.A. Speiser a generation ago, are inclined to find evidence of the antiquity of the traditions embodied in their texts, while Levine stresses certain manifestly late accretions in Leviticus. Milgrom and Levine explicitly invoke the different strands or sources postulated by the Documentary Hypothesis, especially those sources designated P and D, while Sarna announces at the outset that "the Book of Genesis came down to us, not as a composite of disparate elements but as a unified document with a life, coherence, and integrity of its own." He

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then proceeds to write a commentary that makes an occasional discreet reference to an evident discontinuity in the text but prefers to invoke a unifying agency called "the Narrator," and—this surely constitutes a landmark in modern biblical scholarship—manages to dispense entirely with the source-designations E, J, and P without seeming apologetic. In other differences, for Milgrom the category of sacrifice known as *shelamim* is "a well-being offering," while Levine is confident in identifying it as a "gift of greeting," intended to be offered to the deity when the celebrant first enters the sanctuary. Sarna follows a modern scholarly consensus in interpreting *kedeshah* as a cult prostitute, whereas Milgrom is convinced that she provided cultic but not sexual services and that there was no cultic prostitution in the ancient Near East.

Finally, it should be noted that the commentators not only disagree sometimes with each other but also, quite often, with the 1962 JPS translation that was conceived as the cornerstone of their joint enterprise. With a heavy heart, I am compelled to say after reading them that it will soon be time for a completely new translation. Few readers have been tempted to defend the JPS version on grounds of stylistic felicity, and I can attest that it repeatedly obscures or distorts features of the literary art of the original. Its great claims to authority were clarity and painstaking philological precision, but in the light of *The JPS Torah Commentary*, even that begins to look shaky. Sarna occasionally rejects a decision of the translation; Milgrom and, even more, Levine differ with the JPS translators repeatedly, sometimes quite emphatically. At certain points, the divergences are grotesque. Thus, the JPS translation renders the mysterious term *'orot teḥashim*, a material used as an outer covering of the wilderness tabernacle, as "dolphin skins"—where would they have gotten hold of those in the Sinai?—while Milgrom, citing proposed cognates in Sumerian and Hurrian, reads it as "orange-yellow skins." The JPS translates Leviticus 10:2 as follows: "And fire came forth from the LORD and consumed them; thus they died at the instance of the LORD." The last phrase purports to represent the Hebrew *lifnei YHWH* and reflects the JPS mania for translating literal utterances as special idioms or abstractions. Levine justly notes that the phrase means here what it generally means elsewhere, "before the Lord": especially since the subsequent verses are concerned with the removal of the bodies from the sanctuary, what we have is a simple indication of place, not some fancy-footwork reference to agency.

AGAINST the challenge of "the hermeneutics of suspicion" (Paul Ricoeur's phrase) prevalent in the humanities today, is it conceivable that a commentary can ever enlarge our understanding of a text, as opposed simply to providing another understanding? Texts, to begin with, are made up of words, and any attempt to come to grips with the range of possible meanings of the text must begin by registering the precise nuances of the words used. Recovering lexical nuances becomes a task for any text written more than a generation ago, and it obviously has special urgency for an ancient text. In the field of biblical research, where from the 19th century to the present such a wealth of inscriptions, continuous texts, and precious fragments in previously unknown languages has been uncovered, the semantic insights of comparative philology have been particularly valuable, as *The JPS Torah Commentary* repeatedly demonstrates. There are always many feasible readings for any text, and the biblical text itself often makes dizzying use of the ambiguities of certain terms, but we can carry out our many readings more responsibly now because we understand much more clearly the meanings of the Hebrew words. Let me add that I do not have the competence to judge how accurate and how up-to-date is the comparative philological scholarship of these commentaries, though it is worth noting that of the three contributors only Levine has an authoritative first-hand control of the extra-biblical languages.

In many instances, it turns out that seemingly general terms refer precisely to specific ancient Near Eastern institutions or legal practices. Thus, the "liberty" proclaimed to all the inhabitants of the land in the jubilee year (Leviticus 25:10), and duly inscribed in that embracing sense on the Liberty Bell, is rendered "release" in the 1962 JPS translation, with good reason, as Baruch Levine explains: "Hebrew *deror* is cognate with Akkadian *andarāru*, which designates an edict of release issued by the Old Babylonian kings and some of their successors." This edict was part of a general "moratorium declared on debts and indenture." In Genesis 21, when Abimelech resolves a dispute over wells by making Abraham swear that the Hebrew pastoralist will not "deal falsely" (*tishkor*) with him, he is doing more than making a plea for honest treatment. As Sarna observes, this verb, which appears biblically only here in this particular conjugation, "occurs repeatedly in the 8th-century B.C.E. Sfire treaty with the specific technical sense of being guilty of a breach of contractual obligation." The term, then, is not merely an exhortation but what linguists call a performative utterance, ratifying through the act of enunciation, as Sarna concludes, "a pact of mutual nonaggression."

At times, comparative philology provides an almost microscopic clarity of definition for hitherto poorly understood terms, as when Levine instructs us that the rare Hebrew noun *peder*, "suet," which occurs only twice in the Bible, both times in Leviticus, "is cognate with the Akkadian *pitru*, a term used in cuneiform texts, where it refers to the loose covering of fat over the liver."

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Elsewhere, linguistic comparison yields a nuance of implication for a familiar word. *Ne'arim,* which generally means "lads" or "servants," also has a military sense, as is clear in its usage in the battle scenes in 1 and 2 Samuel. Sarna proposes that in its occurrence in Genesis 14, at the end of Abram's campaign against the alliance of four kings, the meaning is "warriors," noting that "The word is found in Egyptian as *ne'arin,* a borrowing from the Canaanite in the specialized sense of 'elite corps.'" Or again, *mela'khah,* one of several biblical terms for "work," is shown by Levine to have the nuance of "assigned tasks, what one is sent to do," because it can be linked with the verbal root *l-'-k,* "to send, dispatch, assign," not found in the Bible but occurring in Ugaritic texts. This throws into sharper focus the cognate noun *mal'akh,* "messenger" or "angel"—as, for example, the *mal'akhim,* surely no angels, that Saul dispatches as hit-men to murder David in 1 Samuel 18.

Beyond such purely lexical considerations, the abundant recourse of the commentaries to excavative scholarship often helps us recover a sense of the concrete historical contexts in which these stories were enacted and these laws pronounced. Thus, in connection with the episode of the copper serpent in Numbers 21, Milgrom notes that a 5-inch-long copper serpent has actually been found at Timna, the copper mine near the Gulf of Aqaba and apparently the region in which the biblical tale is set, dating from about the same period. The indications are that such serpents were used as cult objects by nomadic tribes in this area. Sarna elucidates the mysterious hacking in two of animals in the covenant between God and Abram in Genesis 15 by again citing the Sfire treaty, in which the cutting up of animals is explicitly named as "a form of self-imprecation"—what will be the fate of the signatories if they betray the terms of the treaty. In other instances, the invocation of ancient Near Eastern backgrounds involves more of a leap of inference, but even then it has the effect of opening up possibilities for interpretive consideration, as when Sarna proposes that the shame over nakedness in Genesis 3 obliquely reflects a protest "against pagan fertility cults and a reaction against a Near Eastern practice of priests, as in Sumer, where the cultic ritual was performed in the nude."

In all these respects, the JPS commentary reads like any other scholarly exegesis of the Bible, though a case could be made that it is an unusual synthesis of such scholarship. Its one distinguishing trait is the frequent use of traditional Jewish commentaries, from the Midrashim of late antiquity through the great medieval exegetes, beginning with Saadia in the 10th century, down to Samuel David Luzzato in 19th-century Italy. (Most biblical scholars would not have access to the majority of these commentaries because they would have great difficulty reading post-biblical Hebrew.) The invocation of these sundry sources is more than a gesture of Jewish patriotism, though it also makes an implicit ideological affirmation: the Jews have been one continuous people, from biblical origins to modernity, cherishing a special relation to these great texts of their origins. It is noteworthy in this regard that Levine appends to his commentary a 21-page essay on "Leviticus in the Ongoing Jewish Tradition."

Beyond such linking of the Torah to the subsequent historical experience of the Jewish people, one of the contributors, Jacob Milgrom, after affirming his intention to be "critical, unapologetic, and objective," makes the astonishing theological claim that his commentary "offers reliable support to those who believe that this book and the Torah at large were divinely revealed." It is hard to imagine what in his commentary, including the citation of Jewish sources, he conceives might confirm this claim. In fact, his painstaking accounts of trial by ordeal, ritual contamination by corpses and menstruants, hovering miasmas of impurity, the rite of the scapegoat, and much else, bring us almost uncomfortably close to a thoroughly alien world in which pagan and magical notions have undergone no more than a first phase of monotheistic transformation. But quite apart from such odd gestures to the faithful, the central Jewish feature of the JPS commentary—referring to the traditional exegetes—has an intrinsic justification in the enterprise of understanding the text. Indeed, it raises the question of whether there is such a thing as cumulative knowledge in the study of texts, and the JPS commentary offers a good deal of support for an affirmative answer.

The Bible—and, of course, the Pentateuch in particular—as the text of our culture most intimately associated with moral, theological, and even historical authority, has through the centuries been our most heavily studied book, by Jews and Christians alike. I would contend, however, that until modern times the Hebrew Bible was scrutinized with a different order of attention by Jews than it was by Christians. The reasons for the difference were both theological and linguistic. Jews always conceived this corpus as a textual object complete in itself, addressing the life of a people in real historical time, and not as a typological forerunner to another group of books composed in a different language, pointing through figures and parables to a post-historical end-time. Jews also always investigated the Bible in its original language, and in sharp contrast to the occasional manifestations of Christian Hebraism, they preserved Hebrew as a living language of study and inner experience even when it was no longer a vernacular.

Thus, the sundry Midrashim composed between the 4th and the 9th centuries C.E., though they often propose readings that may seem fanciful to

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the modern eye, exhibit the most remarkable acuteness in identifying connotations and nuances of difference in Hebrew terms. I would suggest that this repeated demonstration of insight into the language is not a consequence of happy intuition but of active participation in a continuous tradition that carried over a finely shaded knowledge of biblical Hebrew into the era of changed rabbinic usage. That tradition, variously refracted but also reinvigorated by the invention of philology and the poetic revival begun in medieval Andalusia, is still palpable in the fine linguistic discriminations of Abraham Ibn Ezra (12th-century Spain, Italy, and France), David Kimhi (12th- and 13th-century France), and Rashi (11th-century France). These were all brilliant readers, but also readers with a deep and ramified rootage in a historically continuous Hebrew culture.

All three of the JPS commentaries provide abundant instances in which the traditional exegetes anticipated specific conclusions of modern scholarship. At least in the effort to understand the plain meaning of the words of the text, they did not belong to a remote, benighted world of naive believers but were joined in the same enterprise, without benefit of Akkadian and Ugaritic, as the latter-day sages of Göttingen and Harvard and Johns Hopkins. Thus, Milgrom comments on a difficult term, *dalyav,* in an enigmatic image that appears in Balaam's oracular poem (Numbers 24:7). Both Ibn Ezra and Luzzato construe it as a variant form of *daliyotav,* "its boughs," whereas "Rashi says that the form of the word is dual and can mean 'buckets' [that is, deriving the term from *deli,* bucket]." He goes on to quote Rashi's elucidation of the image in the poem: a man with two full buckets, the water splashing over the rims as he walks back from the well. To which Milgrom adds, making medieval exegete and modern Semiticist join hands, "In support, Akkadian *dalû* means 'irrigate with water drawn from a well.' "

The JPS Torah Commentary, then, offers a wealth of resources to the serious student of the Bible, but at least intermittently, it suffers from an inclination to perpetuate the legacy of positivism of modern biblical scholarship going back to 19th-century Germany (one might recall here Milgrom's confidence in the possibility of an "objective" commentary). The cognitive model here is, I think, the textual crux. One encounters a difficult place in the text, something that doesn't make sense. With great patience and a little luck—perhaps something unearthed by the archeologist's spade or a phonetic connection suddenly grasped between an obscure biblical word and a term in a Sumerian text—the crux may be solved. Characteristically, all three commentators often invoke the formula that in the present state of knowedge, the text in question cannot yet be understood. The Bible as a whole is conceived as an intricate edifice of puzzlements—philological, compositional, historical—that one by one require solutions and with a combination of ingenuity and serendipity will get them. What these commentators do not readily imagine is that much biblical writing—I am of course not speaking of what scribes may have inadvertently interposed—might have been devised precisely not to yield a solution, or to yield multiple and contradictory solutions, and that this might be the very hallmark of its greatness. Let me cite an example from Sarna, precisely because in most respects he is the most subtle and the most resourceful of the three commentators.

In a 1,300-word excursus on "Jacob's Struggle with the Angel," Sarna first usefully associates the story with the widespread folk tale of the inimical river spirit who opposes a traveler seeking to cross over into his territory, duly noting how the biblical writer has transformed this common material for his own monotheistic purposes. He then cites the venerable Midrash that sees the nameless adversary as "the celestial patron of Esau" (*saro shel Esav*) and argues for the plausibility of that identification. "In summation, the mysterious creature who assails Jacob as he is about to cross the future border of Israel is none other than the celestial patron of Esau-Edom, who is the inveterate enemy of Israel." This conclusion is not so much wrong as wrongly put. The story of Jacob's wrestling with the angel, one of the most haunting in all of ancient literature, is conceived as a puzzle awaiting a solution, like some poorly understood Hebrew term, *peder* or *deror.* Most readers will share the sense that Jacob's grappling in the night with a mysterious "man" by the ford of the Jabbok, before the morning when he will see his estranged brother after twenty-years' separation, is an adumbration of the imminent encounter between the twins. But is that adumbration a political allegory, as the Midrash has it, or a night-world expression of Jacob's psychology, or an experience of the dangerous, inscrutable ambiguity of the divine that touches on yet also transcends the story of fraternal conflict? By proclaiming that the angel is "none other than" Esau's celestial patron, the commentary reduces the biblical tale to a simple linearity that impoverishes it.

In *The Genesis of Secrecy,* the literary critic Frank Kermode suggestively juxtaposes the enigmatic young man in the white shirt in the Gospel according to Mark with the elusive man in the brown mackintosh in Joyce's *Ulysses* in order to argue that a certain kind of narrative works its art by withholding some of its own key meanings. Historical exegesis of the Bible tends to presuppose "solutions," but a literary exegesis, which Sarna himself also practices, and at times quite ably, must be able to respect the secrecy of the Bible—not by enjoining silence but by articulating an order of commentary that will help readers tune into the multiple reverberations of the secrets.

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BOTH Sarna and Milgrom devote considerable attention, often literary in character, to the microscopic level of word choices and isolable motifs and to the macroscopic level of compositional patterns through which smaller narrative segments are woven together. (I leave Levine out of this consideration because there is such limited narrative material in Leviticus.) What is neglected is the crucial middle ground in which literary analysis might consider the stylistic realization and the technical narrative options employed, as motifs are fleshed out and patterns translated into particular acts and speeches and gestures. What happens on this middle ground makes all the difference in the kinds of meanings suggested by the text. Thus, on the first of the three occasions when the story of the sister-bride is told in Genesis (Chapter 12), Sarna comments, "According to the literary concepts and norms of the ancient world, reiteration is a desirable and characteristic feature of the epic tradition. To the biblical Narrator, repetition of the experience serves to emphasize and reinforce his didactic purposes." This is not altogether wrong, but it is too general and a little fuzzy, especially in the vague invocation of "the epic tradition" in relation to Genesis, and in its assumption that these stories are didactic. (Meir Sternberg, one of several recent literary critics of the Bible whom Sarna repeatedly cites in his notes, has made the persuasive distinction that biblical narrative has ideological aims but is never merely didactic.) If one looks carefully at the narrative articulation of the three sister-bride stories, it becomes clear that instead of simple repetition for emphasis, each version is worked out in consonance with its own context to achieve different thematic ends. This procedure of significant variation in seeming repetition is itself one of the distinctive features of the Bible's narrative art.

The first version, set at the very beginning of the sequence of Patriarchal tales, is the most succinct of the three and does everything possible to maximize the force of the story as a foreshadowing of the sojourn in Egypt that will be the fate of Abraham's progeny (an idea already noted in the Midrash). Abram and Sarai go down to Egypt because there is a "heavy famine" in the land. Abram is afraid that the Egyptians will kill him while her "they will let live," just as Pharaoh in Exodus decrees that all the males born will be thrown into the Nile while all the female babies "you will let live." When Pharaoh in Genesis 12 takes Sarai into his harem, God intervenes by afflicting him with plagues, and Pharaoh then peremptorily "sends away" Abram and Sarai, the same verb of dismissal or release repeatedly used in the Exodus narrative.

The second version of the sister-bride story in Genesis 20 does not take place in Egypt but in Gerar, in the northwestern Negev, and it is in no way aligned with the sojourn in Egypt. This time there is no mention of a famine. Abimelech is most unpharaonic in appearing as a man of conscience, more sinned against than sinning, whose castigation of Abraham for deceiving him about Sarah's identity momentarily puts the patriarch at a loss for words (see the significant silence between verses 9 and 10). He is vouchsafed a night-vision colloquy with God, and the odd phrase he uses in challenging God, "Will you also slay a righteous people?," pointedly makes a link between this story and the immediately preceding one, the destruction of Sodom. In this version, Abraham imagines Gerar is another Sodom—a place where if two strangers appear (in this instance, one male and one female) at least one of them is likely to be subject to sexual assault and the other to murder. In the event, he is quite wrong about the moral character of Gerar, and one of the purposes of this episode seems to be a desire to unsettle any simple Hebrew/Gentile polarity. Finally, the remission of the plague of sterility—rereading, we realize it is probably a plague of impotence, hinted in God's words to Abimelech, "Therefore I did not let you touch her"—about which we learn only at the very end of the story, connects the whole episode both with the concern about procreation that dominates Chapter 18 and the second half of Chapter 19, and with Sarah's long-deferred conception, which is announced in the next verse (the beginning of Chapter 21).

The third version of the story, in Genesis 26, involving Isaac and Rebekah, is sandwiched between Esau's selling of the birthright to Jacob and Jacob's theft of the paternal blessing. It is not surprising that much of the articulation of the sister-bride tale here is attuned to the themes of inheritance and blessing. Although famine is again the motive for migration, the place of refuge is Gerar, not Egypt, and it is stressed that the area is part of the promised land of inheritance. Only here is a reiteration of the covenantal promise of blessing and great progeny inserted in the story (verses 3-5), and here the patriarch with his wife is not sent out or driven away but, on the contrary, proceeds to plant crops and tend flocks in territory contiguous with or overlapping the kingdom of Gerar. In this version, Abimelech learns of the matriarch's status as wife not through divine intervention in plague or night vision but by peering out the window and seeing Isaac "fondling" Rebekah—*metsaḥek*, the word-motif that has been following Isaac, *Yitsḥak*, from before his conception. This matriarch is never actually taken into the harem, but is only in danger of being appropriated by the king—perhaps a reflection of Rebekah's powerful and active character in contradistinction to the more passive Sarah. Here, the wealth that accrues to the patriarch is not a gift from the king—as in the Exodus story, when the fleeing Hebrews "despoil" the Egyptians—but the result of his activity as agriculturalist and pastoralist, an anticipation of the precise terms of the

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blessing Isaac will confer on Jacob, and which Jacob will realize later in his dealings with Laban. Finally, despite Sarna's claim that the story "temporarily diverts attention from the ongoing rivalry between Jacob and Esau," this version, in contrast to the two earlier ones, actually concludes with an episode that ties in firmly with the overarching theme of fraternal strife and the struggle for the inheritance: the shepherds of Abimelech quarrel with Isaac's shepherds over wells; and Abimelech is impelled to tell Isaac that he must move off "for you have become far too big for us," just as the reconciled Jacob and Esau later will separate because the great camp of Jacob's family and possessions requires its own space.

The lack of adequate attention to this middle ground of the literary articulation of the narratives is sometimes detrimentally combined with a positivist faith in the invocation of a legal, social, or cultic institution as in itself sufficient reason for a proposed reading. It is, of course, essential to understand what are the ancient institutions that play various roles in the narratives, and in this regard the JPS commentators give readers much useful guidance, but it is quite another thing to assume that recognition of the institution provides an automatic key to the meaning of the story. Let me illustrate this pitfall with a final example, which as it happens takes us beyond the frame of the Pentateuch.

Milgrom, at the end of an excursus explaining the ritual conditions of *ḥerem*, the biblical ban of general destruction, cites the story of the conflict between Samuel and Saul in 1 Samuel 15 over the ban Samuel had enjoined against the Amalekites. Milgrom contends that in fact Saul, after defeating the Amalekites, was punctiliously observing the conditions of the *ḥerem*, bringing back only unblemished animals eligible for sacrifice and in all likelihood intending to slaughter the Amalekite king Agag "before the Lord" as Samuel proceeded to do at the end of the story. According to Milgrom, the fact that Saul is said to lose his kingship without further appeal because of his behavior here must be attributed to the *Tendenz* of "a Davidide (that is, anti-Saulide) author." Such pseudo-historical, quasi-scientific labeling has been a bane of biblical scholarship for over a century. Is there any plausible evidence that there was ever such an animal as a "Davidide author"? It has been comforting to biblical scholars to hypothesize the existence of ideologically definite, politically demarcated "schools" of writers, and it takes no more than the smallest hint of a political viewpoint to justify such conjectural constructs. In fact, the attitudes throughout 1 and 2 Samuel toward David are so complex, and David himself is represented as such a multifaceted, calculating, devious, and at times morally dubious figure, though also on occasion an appealing one, that any hypothesis of "Davidide" authorship looks questionable in the extreme.

But what about the nicely discriminated narrative data, the revelatory movement of dialogue, in the story itself as it is worked out in 1 Samuel 15? The rounds of query and response between prophet and king, as Meir Sternberg has demonstrated in *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative,* show a Saul painfully floundering, at first greeting Samuel with a bald-faced lie, then progressively qualifying his statements as Samuel verbally corners him, and finally confessing his transgression, begging Samuel at least to help him save face before his assembled troops. This is hardly the performance of a man confident that he has scrupulously observed the institutional requirements of the ban.

Saul's self-incrimination can be illustrated with one small strategic point not touched on by Sternberg. When Saul triumphs over the Amalekites, the narrator reports his actions in the following words: "And Saul and the people [or, troops] spared Agag and the best of the flock and the cattle and the second born and the lambs and all that was good, and they did not want to put them to the ban" (my translation). A nicety of biblical grammar here should be noted. The verb "spared" is in the singular in the Hebrew, despite the plural subject, in conformity with a general biblical usage that allows a singular verb when one of the elements of a compound subject is considered the primary actor, the others somehow subsidiary. The grammar thus informs us that it is Saul who did the sparing, with the people merely following his lead. When, however, Saul responds to Samuel's demand that he explain the bleating of sheep and the braying of oxen behind him, these are the words he uses: "From the Amalekites they brought them, for the people spared the best of the flock and the cattle in order to sacrifice to the Lord your God, and the rest we put to the ban."

The little dance from third person plural to third person singular to first person plural is the desperate movement of a guilty liar stumbling over his own feet. First, it is an impersonal "they" who are responsible for bringing the sheep and oxen from the Amalekites. Then, it is the people who "spared" the flocks: the singular verb used before by the narrator is now in perfect accord with its collective subject, but Saul's report entirely suppresses the narrator's firm indication that the king, not the people, was the primary instigator of the sparing. Finally, it is only when Saul speaks of putting the other, more meager animals to the ban that he switches to "we." The narrator's account had said nothing of setting aside the choice animals for the express purpose of sacrifice. At the very least, we are entitled to question the honesty of this purportedly pious motive now introduced by Saul. It is noteworthy that he speaks uneasily of sacrifice "to the Lord

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your God," not quite the tone that would be taken by a man sure he has been performing his solemn obligations before his own God and the God of his people.

Let me hasten to add that this cunning choreography of language in the passage does not provide a "solution" to the episode, as the legal stipulations of the institution of *ḥerem* are purported to do. Milgrom feels free to speak of "Saul's true intention," but a scrutiny of the literary articulation of the story leads instead to the perception of a complex of plausible motives, not to a bedrock of truth which in fact the story is devised to avoid. Saul himself, like most of the major biblical characters, remains elusive, a politically and psychologically persuasive conjunction of suggestive contradictions: inept, foolishly impulsive, self-doubting, pathetically unfit for kingship, and also a heroic and poignant figure, equally victimized by Samuel and by circumstances, sustained by a kind of lumbering integrity even as he entangles himself in a net of falsehood and self-destructive acts. The greatness of the story resides in this rich tension of internal oppositions in the characterization, and the last thing a commentary should do is to dissolve the tension by invoking the simplifying hypothesis of an "anti-Saulide author."

In all this, I do not mean to suggest that the historical-philological and the literary approaches to the Bible are mutually contradictory undertakings. On the contrary, the exacting deployment of broad learning in the JPS commentaries demonstrates how much literary students of the Bible can refine their own analysis by attending to what the cumulative enterprise of scholarship has discovered about the meanings of biblical words, the nature of biblical institutions, the intricate tapestry of ancient historical contexts, and the possibilities of sedimentation and sutures in the texts. What many of the historical scholars for their part still need to understand better is that a literary text—even an ancient and canonical one—is more than the broken pieces of a potsherd in an archeological find to be fitted together like a jigsaw puzzle. At least to the extent that the redacted text forms a coherent continuity, and that is usually the case in the Bible, it is artfully contrived, as are literary texts from other times and places, to open up a dense swarm of variously compelling possibilities, leading us to ponder the imponderables of individual character, human nature, historical causation, revelation, election, and man's encounters with the divine. If all literary texts are open-ended, the Bible, certainly in its narrative aspect, is willfully, provocatively open-ended: that, indeed, is why there is always room for more commentary.

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Rap and Racism

Terry Teachout

For the average middle-class listener, whether black or white, rap music is a landscape too alien for anything but discomfort. That rap is loud, aggressive, and often obscene is the least of it. Every New Yorker who reads the papers knows that the teenagers who allegedly raped and brutalized a woman jogger in Central Park last year entertained themselves after their arrest by collectively chanting the lyrics to "Wild Thing," a popular record by the Los Angeles rapper Tone-Loc. Many well-informed Americans know, too, that a member of the rap group Public Enemy gave an interview to the Washington *Times* in which he delivered an anti-Semitic tirade of shocking virulence. And yet rap now fills the most popular daily program on MTV. It has been called by the composer Quincy Jones "the jazz of the 90's." And it has been described by Jon Pareles of the New York *Times* as "the most startlingly original and fastest-growing genre in popular music."

Rap, also known as "hip-hop," is typically performed by a three-man group. The "DJ" (which of course stands for disk jockey) operates a pair of turntables on which he plays bits and pieces of phonograph records, turning them by hand in short, sharply accented rhythmic patterns called scratches. A second man, variously known as the "producer" or "programmer," operates a beat box, an electronic device that simulates the sound of a drum set, and a sampler, a synthesizer that holds various sounds in its computerized memory and reproduces them when triggered by the operator. Working together, these two people lay down a collage-like background of beats, scratches, and electronic sound effects over which the "rapper" recites lyrics (true rappers never sing) generally consisting of semi-improvised couplets in rough-and-ready tetrameter.

From its beginnings in the mid-70's, rap has chiefly been performed by young black males, and their subject matter is as uniform as their age, color, and gender. Though women rappers do exist, and though their work is regularly singled out for special attention by critics, to date none has contributed significantly to the development of rap. (Neneh Cherry, recently profiled in the New York *Times Magazine,* is not a true rapper but a popular singer who makes highly effective use of rap devices in her work.) White rappers also exist, but their work is derivative and of no musical interest.

In most raps, the rapper "disses" (attacks) other rappers and asserts his own superior verbal skills. Many raps consist solely of this kind of boasting. Beyond that, the content of rap can be summarized in terms of two commonly leveled criticisms, that it is obscene and that it is "sexist." Indeed, most rappers do make elaborate use of profanity, and also equate verbal with sexual prowess. Rapping is itself an outgrowth of "the dozens," a highly competitive verbal game of rhyming sexual insults developed between the world wars in the ghettos of urban America. Just as victory in this game is understood as a token of sexual superiority, so the verbally proficient rapper is assumed to be sexually proficient in like degree. When L.L. Cool J (short for "Ladies Love Cool James") proclaims "No rapper can rap quite like I can/I'll take a muscle-bound man and put his face in the sand," the implication is clear.

Not surprisingly, women in the world of rap are largely, if not exclusively, objects of transient sexual gratification. Many raps consist of a graphic description of a night's trolling. ("Evil 'E' was out coolin' with a freak one night/Fucked the bitch with a flashlight/Pulled it out and left the batteries in/So he could get a charge when he begin.") In the world of rap it is the destiny of women to be picked up, casually fornicated with, and left behind by their men.

Some rappers, to be sure, are quite far removed from the life evoked by lyrics like these. Run-D.M.C., for instance, is an extremely popular ensemble of thoroughly middle-class black teens who have endorsed Adidas sneakers and Coca-Cola; DJ Jazzy Jeff and the Fresh Prince, a clean-cut rap team that has successfully "crossed over" to a fully integrated mainstream teenage audience, specialize in sanitized raps like "Parents Just Don't Understand" ("She said, 'What's wrong? This shirt cost twenty dollars!'/I said, 'Mom! This shirt is plaid with a butterfly collar!'"). But such sentiments are comparatively rare. More typical is Ice-T, a former member of a Los Angeles gang, whose raps are mosaics of sex and violence in which the brutality of street life in a culture where drugs are sold around the clock is taken for granted. His 1988 album *Power* features on its jacket a photograph of a nearly nude woman holding a sawed-off shotgun, and the songs within are stark, obscenity-ridden narratives of gang life. ("Copped an alias, bailed out in an hour or less/I keep a bank for that don't know about the rest/Copped another piece, hit the dark streets/Rollin' once again, fuck the damn police!")

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Ice-T is frequently accused of glorifying violence. He claims in his own defense that his music is a realistic portrait of a violent world desperately in need of change. Similar arguments can be heard from the rapidly growing number of rappers who espouse "socially-conscious" rap. Many albums now contain at least one track extolling the virtues of self-help and attacking the evils of drugs and black-on-black violence, and several groups put a consistent emphasis on self-help as a means of enhancing racial pride and breaking the cycle of poverty. Boogie Down Productions' *Ghetto Music: The Blueprint of Hip Hop* is devoted almost entirely to songs like "You Must Learn," a paean to the importance of teaching black history in the public schools:

> Pump my mind with "See Jane run."
> See John walk in a hard-core New York?
> Come on, now, that's like a chocolate cow,
> It doesn't exist, no way, no how.
> It seems to me that in a school that's ebony,
> African history should be pumped up steadily.
> But it's not—and this has got to stop.
> "See Spot run? Run, get Spot!"
> Insulting to a black mentality,
> A black way of life or a jet-black family.

Unfortunately there is sometimes more to "self-help" than meets the eye. Boogie Down Productions' first album, *By Any Means Necessary,* took its title from a speech by Malcolm X, a figure greatly esteemed by rappers, and another figure held in high regard in certain rap quarters is Malcolm's successor as chief spokesman for the Black Muslim community, Louis Farrakhan.

Among rappers, to speak of Louis Farrakhan is to speak of Public Enemy, winner of the 1988 *Village Voice* critics' poll and the most celebrated and controversial of all rap groups. Spike Lee brought Public Enemy to the attention of the general public when he featured its recording "Fight the Power" in his movie *Do the Right Thing.* The members of Public Enemy all belong to the Nation of Islam, the Black Muslim sect led by Farrakhan; members of the Fruit of Islam, the paramilitary wing of the Nation of Islam, provide on-stage security at Public Enemy concerts. "Bring the Noise," one of Public Enemy's popular numbers, contains the lines "Farrakhan's a prophet and I think you ought to listen to/What he can say to you, what you ought to do." Other tracks on the group's latest album, *It Takes a Nation of Millions to Hold Us Back,* contain explicit references to "black nationalism" and to the Black Muslim demonology familiar to readers of *The Autobiography of Malcolm X:*

> To those that disagree, it causes static
> For the original Black Asiatic man
> Cream of the earth
> And was here first
> And some devils prevent this from being known
> But you check out the books they own
> Even Masons they know it
> But refuse to show it—yo
> But it's proven and fact . . .

The pro-Farrakhan sentiments of Public Enemy were not widely noticed until the Washington *Times* ran its interview with the group's "minister of information," one Professor Griff, last May. The *Village Voice* later published extended excepts from this interview, and other newspapers too began to report that Professor Griff had called Jews "wicked" and had blamed them for "the majority of wickedness that goes on across the globe." In fact, he had much more to say on the subject:

> How come we don't talk about how the Jews finance these experiments on AIDS with black people in South Africa? How come we don't talk about those things? . . .
>
> [The Jews] *have* to keep black people in check in America. That's wicked. They have to say Qaddafi is a hater; they have to say Farrakhan is a hater; they have to say the Ayatollah Khomeini is just a religious fanatic; they have to say Idi Amin kills his own people. . . . Personally speaking, these men I admire. . . .
>
> Is it a coincidence that the Jews run the jewelry business, and it's named *jew*-elry? No coincidence. Is it a coincidence to you that probably the gold from this ring was brought up out of South Africa, and that the Jews have a tight grip on our brothers in South Africa? . . .
>
> [The Jews] have a history of killing black men. What am I supposed to fear? I fear no one but Allah. I fear God alone. So the Jews can come against me. They can send the IRS after me. They can send their faggot little hit men.

Asked by David Mills of the *Times* for evidence of these accusations, Professor Griff cited Henry Ford's anti-Semitic tract, *The International Jew,* plus a book circulated by the Nation of Islam called *The Secret Relationship Between Blacks and Jews,* and "a series of tapes" by "a brother by the name of Steve Cokely." Cokely, then an adviser to the mayor of Chicago, claimed in 1988 that 300 Jewish doctors were inoculating blacks with the AIDS virus.*

The *Village Voice* story was published on June 20. The next day, Professor Griff was "fired" from Public Enemy by Chuck D, the group's leader and chief rapper, who called a press conference to apologize to "anyone who might have been offended by Griff's remarks." A week later, Def Jam Recordings, the rap division of CBS Records and Public Enemy's record label, announced that the group was "disbanding for an indefinite period of time."

By August 10, however, Public Enemy had already announced its "reorganization," with Professor Griff rehired under the title of "supreme allied chief of community relations." A number of Jewish groups reacted heatedly to the news. Said Rabbi Abraham Cooper of the Simon Wiesenthal Foundation: "Imagine if there was a country-music group in which one of the members was an open member of the Ku Klux Klan, repeating all the slanders against blacks, Jews, and Vietnamese boat people. How long would he last in the music

* See Joseph Epstein, "Racial Perversity in Chicago," COMMENTARY, December 1988.

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community?" In fact, reaction within the music community was tepid at best; Russell Simmons, president of Def Jam Recordings, told David Mills that the members of Public Enemy were "ideological idiots" but added irrelevantly that "I listen to Frank Sinatra, too, but I don't listen to him for ideology."

Last December, Def Jam released a new Public Enemy single, "Welcome to the Terrordome," which includes a reference by Chuck D to the controversy over Professor Griff's Washington *Times* interview: "Crucifixion ain't no fiction/ So-called chosen, frozen/Apologies made to whoever pleases/Still, they got me like Jesus." On December 28, a letter was sent by the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai Brith to CBS Records protesting "Welcome to the Terrordome" on the grounds that it "contains blatantly anti-Semitic lyrics, including the repulsive and historically discredited charge of deicide on the part of the Jews. . . ." In response, Chuck D told the Washington *Post* that the passage in question was not anti-Semitic, and dismissed criticism of "Welcome to the Terrordome" as "paranoiac."

As for CBS, Walter Yetnikoff, head of CBS Records, issued a memorandum on January 11 calling upon CBS employees to ensure that "none of our recordings promote bigotry." Public Enemy was not mentioned. Earlier, Def Jam had announced that Public Enemy's next album, *Fear of a Black Nation,* would be released on February 21, the 25th anniversary of Malcolm X's assassination, and would include "Welcome to the Terrordome." And when the Grammy Award nominees for 1990 were announced on January 14, one of the songs nominated in the rap category was Public Enemy's "Fight the Power."

Many people who know Chuck D, including Rabbi Cooper, maintain that he is not personally anti-Semitic. I should note, too, that I have failed to encounter any examples of directly anti-Semitic lyrics or public statements by rappers other than the ones made by Professor Griff in the Washington *Times* and by Chuck D in "Welcome to the Terrordome." But the anti-Semitism in those two instances is blatant and unmistakable; and it is not the only pernicious doctrine circulating in the world of rap. Russell Simmons says that "Chuck D is very, very important to a lot of black kids in America—he's contributed so much to black youth, to the growth of black awareness and black pride." The question naturally arises: what kind of awareness? What kind of pride?

One example can be found in a statement Chuck D made last August during an interview with David Hinckley of the New York *Daily News:*

> You have to tell people why, for example, you see so many drug dealers in the black community and not in the white. You explain who's *behind* the drug thing, why it's the brothers who are dying. You point out that Jesse Jackson had twice the qualities of any other candidate, but because we have this system where people are judged by their characteristics, he couldn't win. And then you tell kids to stop wanting a gold chain and a fly [stylish] car and get educated—because black people have to take care of themselves and the only way to do it is as a community.

The last sentence of this statement could have come from any one of a dozen rappers advocating black self-help. The preceding sentences are another matter entirely. They allude to the theory, increasingly popular among urban blacks, that there is a conspiracy by powerful whites to commit "genocide" against the black community. In fact, more or less explicit talk of genocide is not uncommon among "socially conscious" rappers. In their songs, policemen kill blacks casually and deliberately, and the federal government, usually personified by Ronald Reagan or, more recently, George Bush, is the mortal enemy of all blacks. White racism, one and indivisible, is the principle of American social organization; all blacks are its perpetual objects; white and black America are in a state of de-facto war.

What the black response should be to these "facts" is the subject of a recent recording by Ice-T, "This One's for Me":

> Griff is my man, I don't care what he said
> You know what I'm saying?
> And I ain't gonna let them go out like that. . . .
> Anybody out there got problems with Public Enemy,
> Come talk to me. . . .
> I gotta speak my mind, it's time to unload
> On this so-called government we got
> I lied like them, I think I'd get shot
> They sell drugs to kids and say it's us
> And when the cops are crooks, who can you trust? . . .
> Selling drugs is straight-up genocide
> They're gonna laugh while we all die.

Critics of rap are fairly quick to decry "sexism" in recordings like Slick Rick's "Treat Her Like a Prostitute." But when it comes to such raps as "This One's for Me" or "Welcome to the Terrordome," many of these critics are even quicker to mount the nearest fence. Peter Watrous, who reviewed a concert by Public Enemy for the New York *Times,* noted that it opened with a lecture by Professor Griff claiming that the U.S. and Soviet governments were jointly responsible for the AIDS epidemic (admittedly, a slight improvement on blaming the Jews). To this and comparable statements, Watrous's response was that "while the group's political discourse is undigested at best and secondary to the urgency of their overall sound, it at least opens the always necessary debate about racism." So it does—although not the kind of racism Watrous seems to have in mind.

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T.S. Eliot's Anti-Semitism

T.S. ELIOT and PREJUDICE. By CHRISTOPHER RICKS. *University of California Press. 290 pp. $25.00.*

Reviewed by HILTON KRAMER

THIS is a very curious book. Its obvious mission is to relieve T.S. Eliot's reputation of the charge of anti-Semitism, yet the intellectual strategy it adopts as a means of accomplishing this unachievable—and, in fact, unachieved—mission is one that so distends the concept of "prejudice" as to render it supererogatory. Christopher Ricks is too honest and intelligent a critic to engage in any wholesale denial of anti-Semitism in Eliot, yet his elaborate attempts to explain it tend, for the most part, to be attempts to explain it away, to drain it of its patent virulence and redefine it as an understandable, if not quite forgivable, example of the kind of prejudice we are all said to be guilty of to one degree or another. The result is not only a failure to illuminate the role of anti-Semitic sentiment in Eliot's work but something even more troubling—a refusal to deal seriously with the one aspect of Eliot's writing in which anti-Semitism is absolutely integral: that which is addressed to the poet's vision of an ideal society. In a book on *T.S. Eliot and Prejudice,* this is a remarkable dereliction of critical duty.

Eliot's views on society have long been a problem for admirers of his poetry and criticism. They are clearly a problem for Christopher Ricks, and one can easily understand why he should wish to avoid having to deal with them in any systematic way. That subject is, in its political implications, an ugly one—no uglier, perhaps, than W.H. Auden's social views in his Communist period ("the necessary murder," etc.), but very ugly all the same; and Auden had the grace and good sense to repudiate his support of those views once he came to understand their true meaning. This, of course, Eliot never did. He simply—all too simply, alas—upheld a somewhat more sanitized version of his social philosophy until the time came for him to drop the subject altogether. When called upon to clarify the anti-Semitic element in his social thought, Eliot only succeeded—as Ricks well understands—in making matters worse.

Indeed, Ricks cites from Eliot's correspondence some examples of this ill-judged exercise in self-exculpation that have not heretofore come to light. They make painful reading, and do nothing to alter our longstanding impression of a writer in the grip of an *idée fixe* that, as history unfolded on its murderous course, became a burden and an embarrassment. Yet about the place of that idea in Eliot's social thought and about the nature of the thought itself, Ricks has amazingly little to say. In this respect he resembles a great many other critics who have written admiringly about Eliot's poetry. But to write a book called *T.S. Eliot and Prejudice* and not face up to the disfiguring prejudices that are central to Eliot's social thought is, at the very least, an eccentric endeavor. For this book is not, primarily, a study of Eliot's poetry.

That we are in the presence of an eccentric, because oblique, effort at moral exculpation is made abundantly evident in the opening chapter of *T.S. Eliot and Prejudice.* This is devoted to an analysis, and to other critics' analyses, of the poem, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," and of the book, *Prufrock and Other Observations,* which upon its publication in 1917 established Eliot as one of the leading poets of his time. An entire subsection of the chapter—"Talking of Michelangelo"—is focused on the famous lines

> In the room the women come and go
> Talking of Michelangelo.

Much fuss is made over the way this couplet has been read—or rather, in Ricks's view, misread—by a good many of Eliot's critics, among them such distinguished figures as John Crowe Ransom, Hugh Kenner, and Helen Gardner. All of them, Ricks argues, have wrongly assumed that in these lines, which are repeated in the poem, Eliot was ridiculing "the women" in question. Of this, Ricks now insists, we cannot be sure. "For all we *know,* as against suspect (perhaps justifiably, but still)," he writes in a characteristic formulation, "the women could be talking as invaluably as [the art historian] Kenneth Clark."

This strikes me as utter nonsense—the poem would be a very different poem if we were to believe that some deeply informed and illuminating discussion of Michelangelo was in progress—but it is essential to the point Ricks wishes to establish at the outset of *T.S. Eliot and Prejudice.* This is that "What none of the critics will own is how much their sense of the lines is incited by prejudice." Ricks thus straightaway introduces the issue of prejudice against women, but not, as we might suppose he would, given the evidence, in order to establish Eliot's culpability on a roster of biased beliefs that would take us well beyond the subject of anti-Semitism. Eliot is more or less cleared of the charge of prejudice against women, but we—Eliot's readers—are not. Ricks's purpose is to indict *us* for mistakenly assuming that Eliot's lines were intended to ridicule their female subjects. And given the kind of feminist fury that now attends any suggestion of bias against women, in or out of literature, Ricks knows very well that he can count on this allegation—which, I repeat, is brought against us, Eliot's readers—to dwarf and somehow defuse the issue of anti-Semitism, the subject of the very next chapter of the book.

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To the extent that he accepts Ricks's analysis of prejudice in Eliot's critics, the reader of *T.S. Eliot and Prejudice* will be obliged to regard himself as the villain of the tale as he turns his attention to the chapter on "Anti-Semitism."

This entire gambit, designed to put Eliot's critics on the defensive, if not in the dock, does not inspire much confidence in the disinterestedness of Ricks's approach to his difficult subject. The strategy adopted in the opening chapter, which concentrates on picking holes in the arguments of other critics while giving Eliot the benefit of every doubt, is repeated and indeed extended in the chapter on "Anti-Semitism," which somehow contrives to leave us with the impression that on this subject it may, after all, be Eliot who is the injured party. Again, Ricks is not so foolish as to deny Eliot's anti-Semitism. He even goes so far as to speak of its "injustice." But he is equally concerned about an alleged injustice that has been done to Eliot in this matter. In his role as liberal ombudsman, adjudicating the case brought by himself against Eliot's critics alongside the case for and against Eliot, Ricks takes every opportunity to remind us—Eliot's readers—of our supposed prejudices in reading him.

Thus, about the well-known lines in "Sweeney Among the Nightingales,"

> Rachel *née* Rabinovitch
> Tears at the grapes with murderous paws

Ricks writes as follows:

> Yet any simple confidence that Eliot's line is merely riding upon [anti-Semitic] prejudice has to acknowledge that such confidence would itself prejudice the matter.

That we are not entirely wrong in suspecting an anti-Semitic prejudice in Eliot's lines, Ricks is willing to grant; but this, in his view, has to be weighed against the alleged prejudice we bring to the reading of the lines:

> This is not to deny that it is natural to suspect [an anti-Semitic motive], or even that it is right to suspect [such a motive]; but it is wrong to put it to oneself that one knows rather than suspects, and this matters because of the relation of prejudice—of which Eliot stands accused—to suspicion.

Ricks restates the point again and again. About an anti-Semitic passage in the posthumously published manuscript of *The Waste Land,* he writes:

> Yet even here, in confronting what is probably the darkest variant reading in Eliot, . . . it is crucial that resistance to an injustice perpetrated by Eliot should not issue in an injustice to Eliot.

He then gives us what I believe can be said to be a summary of his position on the whole question of T.S. Eliot and anti-Semitism:

> Usually in considering Eliot's "uglier touches" of anti-Semitism, the immediate matter is to judge how gravely the anti-Semitism is to be deplored. But the emphasis in this present consideration is rather upon two prior points: what exactly in Eliot's words is to be deplored, and why exactly it is to be deplored. Such an emphasis is in danger of being altogether too patient with impatient injustice, but the neglect of these attentions is in danger of visiting upon a great injustice an injustice which though lesser is pernicious.

It is with this warning about a "pernicious" injustice we may be guilty of in judging Eliot that Ricks turns to *After Strange Gods,* the lectures delivered at the University of Virginia in 1933 in which Eliot made his most programmatic statement about the position of the Jews in an ideal society. Ricks quotes the notorious passage:

> The population should be homogeneous; where two or more cultures exist in the same place they are likely either to be fiercely self-conscious or both to become adulterate. What is still more important is unity of religious background; and reasons of race and religion combine to make any large number of free-thinking Jews undesirable. There must be a proper balance between urban and rural, industrial and agricultural development. And a spirit of excessive tolerance is to be deprecated.

There then follows an exercise in sophistry which I cannot bring myself to summarize. Suffice it to say that grounds are discovered for believing that the sentence about "free-thinking Jews" may be "more defensible" or "less indefensible" than "it will seem if one does not scrutinize one's indignation at it." Besides, Ricks argues, who can really say "what it is to be a Jew"? *The Encyclopaedia of the Jewish Religion,* published in 1966, is invoked for the purpose of informing us that "Presumably a rabbi does not believe that any large number of free-thinking Jews is desirable." Ricks duly acknowledges that "the point about 'free-thinking Jews' is instinct with animus," yet much of the remainder of this chapter on "Anti-Semitism" is devoted to finding other targets for criticism—Gore Vidal, Ezra Pound, George Orwell, Gertrude Himmelfarb, and Leon Wieseltier, among others. The arguments become fussy, picayune, convoluted. Everyone is claimed to be guilty of something, and Eliot is found, in any event, to be less guilty than Pound. (Mercifully, we are not accused of any "injustice" to Pound on the anti-Semitism issue.) We are then invited to consider the larger issue of "Prejudice," which is the ostensible subject of Chapter 3.

As NEITHER that chapter, which takes us less than halfway into *T.S. Eliot and Prejudice,* nor the remaining chapters, which contain some of the best literary criticism in the book, add anything significant to our understanding of Eliot's anti-Semitism or to Ricks's analysis of it, I do not propose to discuss them here. Something needs to be said, however, about Ricks's method—as distinguished from his strategy—in dealing with Eliot's anti-Semitism. It is, for the most part, an Empsonian method that pays very close attention to words while steadfastly keeping its distance from both the pattern of thought the words themselves are used to articulate and the current of history they so clearly reflect. Ricks has an impressive gift for the kind of microanalysis of words that he appropriates from the criticism of William Empson, and it

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allows him to score many points in his disputes with other critics who are sometimes less attentive to the exact meaning of words than he is. But all this scoring of points is, in the end, an arid enterprise, for it illuminates very little about the nature of Eliot's thought—particularly that aspect of his thought that bears most directly on his anti-Semitism. This is a matter on which Empson offers no help at all.

I CONSIDER Eliot a great poet and an even greater literary critic, but he was not, in my opinion, either a very valuable or a very original social thinker. All of his writings on social questions have to be seen, I think, in relation to that larger pattern of utopian and/or collectivistic thought that held so great a part of the European mind in desperate thrall in the aftermath of World War I and the Bolshevik Revolution. Whether it came from the revolutionists on the Left or the reactionaries on the Right or some ghastly amalgam of both, what united this pattern of thought was its abiding hostility to the ethos of liberal democracy, which was believed to be spiritually bankrupt and politically impotent.

To this development, which inflicted upon our century so many of its horrors, Eliot made no significant contribution, but it nonetheless affected him deeply. It induced in him that yearning for a closed society and an organic culture that was nowhere to be found in the world he inhabited—a yearning, moreover, that the dynamics of modernity were every day making it more and more impossible to see realized without recourse to the politics of totalitarianism. That Eliot came perilously close to advocating such a politics in *After Strange Gods* is not a fact that can be denied, but by the time that book came to be published in 1934 its political sentiments were already overtaken by events in Germany. Which is no doubt why Eliot never allowed the book to be reprinted. Still, he never gave up on his dream of a Christian society that would serve, if only in theory, as an alternative to what he regarded as the social and spiritual decadence that was already upon us in the Western democracies.

Eliot was by no means alone in this recoil from the modern world and the chaos it portended: and in the ideal Christian society he conjured up as a panacea for our earthly woes, he was as much of a utopian and collectivist in his thinking about social and cultural alternatives as any Leninist or fascist. Fortunately for him—and for us!—there was no political movement readily available in the Western democracies to which Eliot felt able to attach this utopian yearning. Unlike Pound, he did not in fact become a convert to fascism. His idea of a Christian society remained just that—an idea, which in the course of time and under the pressure of events was found to be

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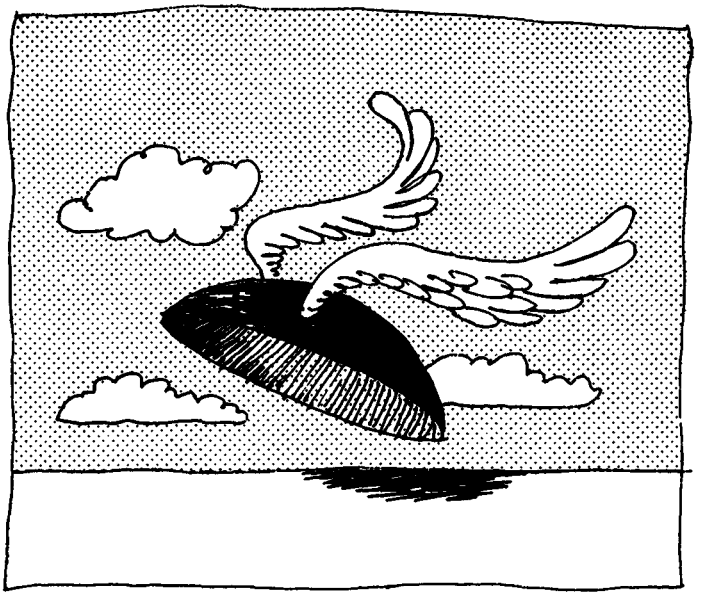

Winter Issue Featuring

"Holy Headgear"

The Yarmulke—on or off?

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so distant from the realities of history that it more or less evaporated as an object of thought.

IN THE context of his social theory, Eliot's anti-Semitism was certainly a coefficient of his idea of a closed Christian society. In the poetry, however, where his anti-Semitism is more powerfully stated, it is an expression of something more conventional, even commonplace—a deep but essentially unquestioned distaste for, even a horror of, the kind of deracinated cosmopolitanism that he and so many others looked upon as a sign of social and spiritual decay. The irony is, of course, that Eliot was himself an outstanding example of the deracinated cosmopolitanism he so much feared and despised. As a polyglot expatriate American who had severed his native roots in order to make his way in an alien society that was deeply opposed to the modernism he practiced as a poet, Eliot found himself as much at odds with the culture and politics of his adopted country as he believed himself to be with those of his homeland. He was, in other words, that most familiar of 20th-century figures—a rootless intellectual who was at the same time a modernist opposed to modernity. The distinction that separates Eliot from the vast class of alienated intellectuals to which he otherwise belongs—and belongs precisely because of the relation in which he stands to modernity—was his ability to make great poetry out of the situation in which he found himself. It was because his poetry spoke so directly and so eloquently of his own conflicted thought and feeling about the world as he found it that it made such a powerful impact upon his readers, for it gave inspired expression to a view of modernity widely shared and widely despaired of.

That the Jews—whether "free-thinking" or not hardly mattered—were for Eliot a symbol and touchstone of the modernity he so desperately wished to repeal is not to be denied. In the end Christopher Ricks's effort to subsume the plain fact of the matter under some larger etiology of "prejudice" fails in its mission of exoneration.

Prisons for Profit?

PRIVATE PRISONS: CONS and PROS. By CHARLES H. LOGAN. *Oxford University Press. 437 pp. $35.00.*

Reviewed by JOHN J. DIIULIO, JR.

DURING the first six months of 1989, the nation's prison population grew by 46,000, the largest such increase on record. There are now over one million people behind bars. Demographic and sentencing trends make it virtually certain that America's population of incarcerated convicts will continue to soar well into the first decade of the next century. An estimated $20 billion per year in tax dollars are now being spent on corrections, with most of this money pouring into the construction, renovation, and staffing of prisons. Recent studies reveal that recidivism rates for many categories of prisoners are reaching new highs, while crime rates, which dipped in the early 80's, are once again on the rise.

All of this has triggered a new and lively debate over the future of American corrections. What, if anything, can be done to protect the public and its purse better than they are protected by existing policies and practices? One provocative answer now favored by many highly respected criminal-justice officials, analysts, and activists is to turn the administration of prisons over to private, for-profit companies.

Private Prisons: Cons and Pros is an extremely thoughtful, well-documented, and, at points, passionately argued case for this view. Its author, Charles H. Logan, is a professor of sociology at the University of Connecticut who has spent the last few years as a research fellow at the National Institute of Justice in Washington. An enviable scholarly achievement, *Private Prisons* is certain to cause new sparks in the broader debate over the transfer of government functions to the private sector, taking its place alongside (or above) works by Stuart Butler, E.S. Savas, and others. And I say this even though I disagree fundamentally with the conclusions reached by Logan, and though I appear frequently in the book as one of his favorite whipping boys (always, however, fairly treated).

FOR much of the 19th century and as late as the 1960's, prisons in many parts of the United States were privately owned and operated. The consequences were not pretty. Inmates were used as slave labor, fed slop, and beaten senseless or killed for minor infractions. Escapes and escape attempts were common. Public officials used the prisons as patronage mills, awarding lucrative contracts to friends, relatives, and political loyalists.

Logan knows this history well. But he also knows that the past is not always prologue. Some two dozen private prison firms have sprung up over the last ten years, the biggest and best known of them being the Tennessee-based Corrections Corporation of America (CCA). CCA operates several institutions, including a Federal Bureau of Prisons halfway house, a few Immigration and Naturalization Service facilities for the detention of illegal aliens, and a small maximum-security jail in Florida. Dozens of jurisdictions now contract with private firms for at least one program—medical services, drug treatment, staff training, inmate vocational training, and more.

Thus far, there has been no evidence that today's private-prison operators engage in the kinds of brutal and corrupt shenanigans that characterized the past, although analysts at the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and elsewhere have written powerful polemics warning that the bleak history of private corrections is bound to repeat itself. But as Logan indicates, these critics, in particular those associated with the ACLU, give too little credit to the changes which (in part thanks to the ACLU itself) have been made in the operating environment of

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corrections facilities. Such abuses could not even begin to occur today without an avalanche of litigation crushing the guilty firms or an activist federal judge sending them into fiscal oblivion.

Logan musters every available scrap of empirical evidence to suggest that, other things being equal, private firms can run prisons more cheaply than can public agencies, and he provides evidence to dismiss the wild claims to the contrary made by the American Federation of State and County Municipal Employees (AFSCME) and other unions representing the nation's public-corrections workers. These unions have charged that, once private firms control a significant share of the labor-intensive prison "market," they will gouge taxpayers, reduce inmate services, and so on. Logan makes mincemeat of such assertions by presenting counterevidence from other government services that have been privatized, and by unpacking the faulty economic logic implicit in the charges. Even so, however, he cannot really clinch his case, and he does not pretend otherwise: "Private prisons," he concedes, "will not necessarily be less expensive than those owned and run directly by government."

But the most interesting part of this book concerns the morality of private-prison management. Logan starts mainly with the libertatian premise that, in most circumstances, the rights and freedoms of individuals ought to trump the competing interests of the community or the state. Invoking the ideas and authority of thinkers from John Stuart Mill to Robert Nozick, he angles toward a positive philosophy according to which not only is there nothing morally wrong with putting corrections in private hands, but there is every moral advantage to doing so.

Logan's case for the "propriety of proprietary prisons," as he phrases it, rests on at least two sets of nonutilitarian arguments. First, he contends that private operators, simply by virtue of being private, reflect and embody the legal values codified in communal penal statutes more faithfully than can state bureaucrats. Second, he attempts to turn the tables on those who invoke the traditonal symbolism surrounding Anglo-American criminal courts and law-enforcement agencies—the robes of the judge, the badge of the policeman, the state patch of the corrections officer—in order to bolster the idea of criminal-justice administration as an inherently public function. If it is communal moral symbols that we covet, "we could find plenty of them in a contractual situation. The contract itself is a powerful symbol of legally enforceable obligations and responsibilities in both directions. . . . [W]hat is it that we are ultimately trying to symbolize? What it ought to be is legal authority, not government employment."

In discussing the morality of private management, Logan demonstrates a refreshing willingness to take on and, where appropriate, to dispense with contrary arguments proffered by big-name thinkers whose pronouncements on the topic border on the inane: one notable instance is a widely cited *New Republic* essay by Michael Walzer which, Logan shows, is almost as devoid of serious moral reasoning as it is innocent of real knowledge about how the public agents in question actually operate. Yet this is not to say that Logan has himself written the final word on either the comparative cost-effectiveness or the morality of private corrections. There are, by my count, four sets of flaws in his book.

First, Logan never comes to grips with the fact, openly admitted by many private prison executives, that their success has been due largely to "corrections creaming." It is one thing to run a handful of institutions for women, juveniles, and low-level felons; it is quite another to administer the nation's Leavenworths, Atticas, and San Quentins. The director of the Federal Bureau of Prisons has more, and more difficult, inmates to manage in one-fifth of his institutions than do all the private-prison operators put together. It is in labor-intensive, high-custody prisons for men that per-inmate costs are highest and administrative problems are greatest; private firms have assiduously avoided going into this area.

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And even with respect to low-custody operations, it is clear that cost calculations are based on some rather creative bookkeeping techniques; for every example of a safe, clean, cost-effective private facility there are ten examples of equally outstanding public facilities. In building his argument, Logan simply underplays these and related countervailing realities.

Second, like most pro-privatization hounds, no matter how hard he sniffs, Logan can sense only human caprice behind the fact that in our society there are both government and business, both politics and markets, both public agencies and private corporations, both Masters of Public Administration and Masters of Business Administration. Seeing that business can perform certain relatively noncontroversial functions (e.g., trash collection) better and for less money, he all but infers that the same must be true for every activity now performed by government. But there is a difference between picking up garbage and locking up prisoners, between delivering the mail and depriving people of their liberty, between authorizing someone to check the water supply and authorizing someone to shoot a fleeing convict.

Everybody agrees on the need to pick up the garbage—all of it—but not everybody agrees on the multiple and competing public goals involved in corrections: how many offenders should be incarcerated, for how long, and under what conditions of confinement. We thus place the task of administering prisons in public hands, and we purposely tie those hands with "red tape," an ungenerous phrase for complex legal and administrative safeguards which ensure that no important public value (e.g., due process) is routinely sacrificed in the pursuit of other goals. Along with most privatizers, Logan trivializes this healthy public-private duality. That his work in support of such anti-government views has been conducted through a public university and a public research institute is a delicious irony that I will let pass without further comment.

Third, Logan's philosophical arguments are quite problematic. His notion that a signed, sealed, and delivered for-profit contract is the symbolic moral equivalent of traditional public trappings would raise a laugh in Blackstone, Professor Kingsfield, 19th-century slave traders, used-car dealers, and anyone else familiar with the place of contract in the theory and practice of Anglo-American law. His enlistment of Mill and other thinkers is weak and misleading, although at least he does not commit the common mistake of invoking Adam Smith, who actually argued in favor of the public administration of criminal justice.

Last but not least, Logan falls to characterizing the moral opposition to privatization as "theological." This labeling betrays the one element of confused intellectual hubris in what is an otherwise excellent treatise. Logan himself, after all, hardly restricts his moral argument to utilitarian grounds. Rather than chiding his opponents for dogmatism, or lightly denigrating their veneration of traditional public symbols, he would do better to recognize that beneath both his own position and its opposite there lie rebuttable first assumptions about the "propriety of proprietary prisons."

These criticisms aside, Logan's *Private Prisons* is an important book that should be read far and wide.

Strange Alliance

VIETNAM NOW: A CASE FOR NORMALIZING RELATIONS WITH HANOI. By JOHN LEBOUTILLIER. *Praeger. 115 pp. $18.95.*

Reviewed by TODD L. NEWMARK

A STRANGE alliance of 60's activists, Vietnam veterans, and maverick conservatives is pushing to normalize relations with Hanoi. Among the conservatives, former New York Congressman John LeBoutillier, president for the last six years of a group called Account for POW/MIA's, may well be the most vocal spokesman.

The conservative case for normalization runs back at least as far as February 1, 1973, when, only days after the signing of the Paris "peace" accords, then-President Nixon sent an important secret communiqué to then-Premier Pham Van Dong of North Vietnam. In it, Nixon promised to "contribute to postwar reconstruction in North Vietnam" roughly $3.25 billion in "grant aid over five years" plus "other forms of aid" falling "in the range of $1 to $1.5 billion depending on food and other commodity needs of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam." The note contained no *quid pro quo*, but, according to LeBoutillier, in exchange for the Nixon letter "Hanoi handed the United States representative in Paris a list of Americans held in Laos" and in so doing "established an all-important linkage: the release of American POW's in Laos . . . to the payment of money to Hanoi." Over the next 60 days, 591 American POW's returned home from North Vietnam, but suspicions lingered that others, unaccounted for, still remained in Indochina.

The Nixon pledge (which, as its drafter, Henry Kissinger, rightly points out in his memoirs, "presupposed both congressional approval *and* Hanoi's living up to the Paris agreement") was soon buried under an avalanche of events—Watergate and the fall of South Vietnam—and bureaucratic sloth. Then in March 1977 a delegation appointed by Jimmy Carter returned to Hanoi to resume exploratory talks on normalization and concluded, after a three-day visit, that there were no live POW's being held. The road to improved relations seemed open, but the process broke down again in the fall of 1978 when increasingly warm relations between Hanoi and Moscow were sealed by a twenty-five-year pact of friendship and cooperation. In December 1978, with no little encouragement from the Soviets, the Vietnamese invaded Cambodia to knock out the China-backed regime of Pol Pot and China then retaliated with its own incursions into northern Vietnam.

TODD L. NEWMARK, *a new contributor, served in Vietnam and has just completed a book on the social history of the Vietnam era.*

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Hardly had the dust settled from the Indochina border wars than Ronald Reagan came into office promising to give the POW/MIA issue "the highest national priority." But, in what LeBoutillier sees as a drastic downgrading of the issue, it was turned over to Assistant Secretary of Defense Richard Armitage and a small band of national-security specialists, including Robert McFarlane and Donald Gregg, who proceeded to set policy singlehandedly. While not actually ruling out the possibility of survivors in Laos, the Reagan White House remained skeptical and in any case refused to link normalization to the recovery of live POW's, fearing (according to LeBoutillier) "that if Hanoi and Washington were ever to reach an accord for the return of these prisoners in return for diplomatic normalization, a lifting of the trade embargo, and economic assistance, then Hanoi's regime would be resuscitated."

LeBoutillier believes we have much to gain and little to lose by the reversal of such policies, which have carried over into the Bush administration. The next step, he says, is ours, and that means immediate, unconditional recognition of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (as it is now known), the opening of embassies, and the exchange of ambassadors. American aid should then be conditioned upon a full accounting of POW/MIA's, the release of political prisoners, the release of Amerasian children for emigration, and the evacuation of Vietnamese forces from Cambodia. (A withdrawal was ordered unilaterally by Vietnam after this book went to press.) As an added bonus, U.S. businessmen could begin investing in Vietnam, and the U.S. military could actually regain the use of the ports of Danang and Cam Ranh Bay, built by us in the first place, as strategic outposts in the Far East.

All this sounds enticing, and suitably bipartisan. With normalization, old antiwar activists could resume their infatuation with Hanoi, while devout interventionists could feel triumphant in the knowledge that a U.S. presence—economic, military, and diplomatic—was balancing Soviet power in a region once deemed indispensable to American security. Vietnam is dirt-poor, underfed, and needs U.S. trade and aid, and Nguyen Van Linh, the new party chief who replaced Truong Chinh in 1986, is, we are told, an economic reformer. He will come to terms.

But will he? Indications are that the regime in Hanoi would welcome an epidemic of East-bloc freedom about as much as Dracula would welcome daybreak. At a plenum of the Central Committee, held in Saigon in August, the General Secretary declared: "The fact that the imperialists—especially the U.S. imperialists—are leaving no stone unturned in an attempt to affect the situation of a number of socialist countries with the aim of driving them into the free world of capitalism is a sufficient proof of their wolfish nature." Rejecting political pluralism and "bourgeois liberalism," the meeting's final communiqué vowed that "the workers of Vietnam will stick in all circumstances to the socialist road and never adopt capitalism." LeBoutillier envisions a softening of the regime once high-level contacts are in place, but he merely pecks and pokes at the all-important matter of human rights, speaking here and there of the release of political prisoners, and recalling one worship service he witnessed as a sign of spiritual life. Surely internal freedom consists of more than that. What about freedom of the press? Of assembly? Protests and opposition parties? Authentic elections? These he does not mention. Beyond prescribing normalization, he fails to address the fundamental question of how the Vietnamese people may be free at last, not only from outside interference, but from the tyranny of their own Marxist masters.

What seems to top the agenda for LeBoutillier (and other proponents of normalization) is business contacts, strategic jockeying, and (of course) the matter of POW/MIA's. No doubt, the U.S. could benefit marginally from trade with Vietnam, but how much aid would be

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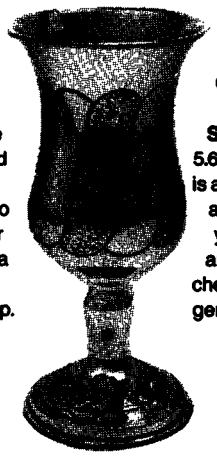

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exacted in return for this "privilege"? And of what advantage, in the era of Gorbachev, are more bases on the Asian mainland, except that, for Hanoi, they would be an excellent pretext to charge usurious rents?

LeBoutillier reminds us repeatedly of the Soviet threat to the region, but the Soviets do not appear anxious to pounce on Thailand or the Philippines, the nearest dominoes. And, in any case, chances are that Vietnam would merely take tribute from Sam without sending Ivan home. As we know from the 60's, when it drew support from both China and Russia without alienating either, Hanoi is very adept at triangles.

As for the more emotional issue of POW/MIA's, LeBoutillier is not alone in believing that prisoners remain in Indochina, but no credible evidence has turned up in the last decade, no leaks or live POW's, to prove the existence of a cover-up either in Washington or Hanoi. Richard Nixon, in a partially dissenting introduction to this book, writes: "I do not share the author's optimism that Americans are still alive in Indochina." After all, by what logic would Hanoi deny their existence?

STILL, Hanoi is definitely worried—not about China or the U.S., however, but about accommodation between the superpowers that would make it impossible to play one rival against the other. This may explain the determined and studiously advertised Vietnamese departure from Cambodia, as well as the urgent courtship of sympathetic Americans. Vietnam is a poor country which would like to pick the pockets of the rich without altering ideological hue. To do so, it feels obliged to appeal not to American idealism and love of freedom but to what it believes are America's baser instincts: avarice and the Open Door.

But that is exactly why, rather than allowing Hanoi to achieve by indirection what it cannot achieve through legitimate channels, we would be wise to tell it, for once, to choose the straightest line between two points—and liberalize now, before we agree to move ahead.

Attacking the Jews

TOWARD A JEWISH THEOLOGY OF LIBERATION. By MARC H. ELLIS. *Orbis Books. 180 pp. $22.95.*

Reviewed by
RICHARD L. RUBENSTEIN

NO CONTEMPORARY movement in Christianity has aroused as much interest as liberation theology, and it was almost inevitable that Jewish thinkers would explore its relevance as well. Marc H. Ellis is a member of the faculty of the Maryknoll School of Theology, the intellectual center of liberation theology in North America. *Toward a Jewish Theology of Liberation* first appeared in 1987, and has now been published in an enlarged edition with a new concluding chapter entitled "The Palestinian Uprising and the Future of the Jewish People."

Ellis sees the Holocaust as the formative event of contemporary Judaism, and he regards Holocaust theology, with its strong commitment to Jewish survival, as a form of "fidelity" to those who died in the camps. Nevertheless, he faults Holocaust theologians, among them Emil L. Fackenheim, Rabbi Irving Greenberg, and myself, for neglecting the covenant between God and Israel—by which he means the prophetic demand that Israel seek justice for the oppressed and the marginalized in their struggle for liberation. The oppressed Ellis has in mind are the dispossessed of the Third World, American blacks, and, above all, Palestinian Arabs whose demand for statehood and independence Ellis takes to be a fundamental imperative of his own theology.

According to Ellis, what has rendered many Jews incapable of solidarity with the oppressed is the quest for political empowerment. Following the lead of the neoconservatives, the Jewish mainstream both in the Diaspora and in Israel has become ensnared in "idolatry"—the idolatry of "capitalism, nationalism; survival at any cost." Whatever "fidelity to covenantal values" may still remain in contemporary Jewish life, the "struggle to be faithful to those values has been shadowed by the reality of *betrayal* [emphasis added], for to advance our own interests we have been slave merchants and masters, supported corrupt kings and governments, and even at times oppressed one another." On just about every issue over which the Jewish community finds itself in conflict with blacks, Palestinians, or left-wing ideologues, Ellis sees an instance of Jewish "betrayal."

Yet in spite of the alleged failings of the Jewish mainstream, Ellis reports that he is encouraged by "movements of Jewish renewal." These include the New Jewish Agenda in the United States, the *Oz VeShalom* movement in Israel, which strongly opposes continued Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, and the Jewish peace movement. Above all, Ellis holds that "at the center of the struggle to be faithful as a Jew today is the suffering and liberation of the Palestinian people." Winning that struggle requires, on the part of Jews, "a fundamental confession and repentance of past and present transgressions." Only thus will they be enabled to move "beyond empowerment to a liberation encompassing all those struggling for justice, including those we once knew as enemy."

Does Ellis acknowledge any danger in the path he advocates? He concedes that Israel may some day suffer a decisive military defeat. Nevertheless, he argues, "If military defeat does come and if the civilian population is attacked, the result, though tragic, will not by any meaningful definition be another Holocaust." Though one would think no responsible leader would dare risk a situation in which Jewish lives would depend upon the mercies of victorious Palestinians, the demand that Jews take that risk, and in the name of Jewish values, is central to Ellis's thought.

Ellis's caricature of the views of the Jewish "mainstream" is hardly worthy of extended comment, any more than is his understanding

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of contemporary anti-Semitism, whose "real" locale today, he writes, is "in the Jewish community, where images of the unwashed, the ignorant, and the terrorist are repeated *ad nauseam*," and in "Israel's refusal to recognize and negotiate with the Palestine Liberation Organization." I would, however, call attention to Ellis's use of the term "betrayal," especially loaded in a theological context. Although the ancient prophets excoriated Israel for failing to keep the covenant, the idea of betrayal has another root, in the image of Judas Iscariot betraying his master for money with a kiss. Over the centuries, this image has done almost as much as the Christ-killer accusation to fix historical obloquy on the Jewish people. Ellis's use of this image, indeed, opens his own theological views (no less than his political ones) to the charge of anti-Semitism.

By contrast, any genuinely Jewish liberation theology would focus its sympathies on the Jews themselves; would, like any properly non-utopian Christian theology, base itself on a recognition of the tragic element in human affairs; and would work for a realistic amelioration of the human condition. Above all, such a theology would insist that the Holocaust has lost none of its relevance for Jewish faith and experience, or as an operative model which Israelis in particular must consider in assessing their political choices. On the contrary, with every day of the *intifada* the Holocaust gains further relevance as an ever-present reminder of the fate that awaits Israel should its defenses ever falter.

Computers & God

MICROCOSM: THE QUANTUM REVOLUTION IN ECONOMICS AND TECHNOLOGY. By GEORGE GILDER. *Simon & Schuster. 426 pp. $19.95.*

Reviewed by GEORGE RUSSELL

THERE is no negotiating with prophets. With them, the future is all-or-nothing: revelations, accusations, salvation, damnation, finger-pointing, truth or consequences. The best sort of people usually shun them. Sometimes, the authorities have to be called in. . . .

These may be modern times, but something akin to that feeling of secular unease has been stirred by the publication of the latest book by George Gilder, the indefatigable author of *Wealth and Poverty* and *The Spirit of Enterprise*, Reaganaut exponent of entrepreneurial populism, devout Christian. Most of *Microcosm* looks to be no more than a journalistic examination of the expanding computer revolution, a topic on which Gilder writes with considerable ability and expertise. But the book wants to be much more than that. It is an ambitious and provocative attempt to link physics, technology, capitalism, and politics within a revelatory framework that is ulti-

GEORGE RUSSELL *is a senior editor at* Time *magazine.*

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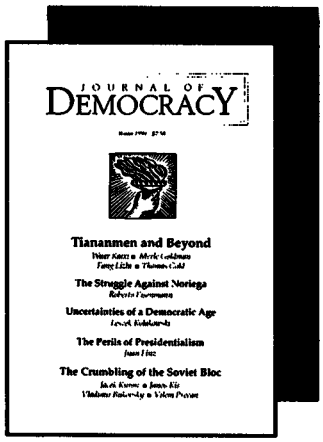
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mately religious in inspiration (and Christian in content). Gilder believes, and herein attempts to show, that the computer is also a proof of the existence of God.

Actually, if he had put the proposition in those terms, he might have caused less of a stir, by offending a smaller audience. But instead, prophet-wise, he takes on nothing less than what he perceives to be the conventional wisdom of the entire secular, rationalistic order, the prevailing philosophy of scientific materialism which has, he writes, choked the world with bad physics, bad economics, bad politics, and bad computer design. This is the wisdom which is being blown asunder by the advent of the Microcosm, a catch phrase that Gilder uses to describe the subatomic playing field of the people he most deeply admires, the entrepreneur-inventors of Silicon Valley, avatars of a global information revolution. Their efforts are sweeping aside old, "superstitious" verities in the physical universe, and also clearing the way for global entrepreneurialism, a new era of individual and spiritual freedom, and, finally, a return to morality and the contemplation of the universal mind of God.

If all this sounds transcendental, it is. As Gilder puts it:

> Overthrowing the superstitions of materialism, . . . modern man is injecting the universe with the germ of his intelligence, the spoor of this mind. . . . Thus the triumph of the computer does not dehumanize the world; it makes our environment more subject to human will. . . . Giving up the material idols and totems in his ken, [man] is gaining at last his promised dominion over the world and its creatures.

Hence the unease. In the *New Republic,* Robert Wright has argued that Gilder's *Microcosm* represents muzzy-headed New Age thinking for conservatives, pop-spiritualism for the supply-side crowd to match the competing, vaguely leftish chorus of Zen-physicist futurists. But is there really no difference between Gilder's technology-driven spiritualism and the millenarianism of the pyramids and channeling set?

Sandwiched between such classic Gilderisms as "The central event of the 20th century is the overthrow of matter," or, "To comprehend nature, we have to stop thinking of the world as basically material and begin imagining it as a manifestation of consciousness," is an exhaustive examination of the computer revolution, a U.S.-focused capitalistic explosion that rivals any industrial revolution of the past. Gilder tracks this revolutionary movement out of the classrooms at Cal Tech into the entrepreneurial hothouse of Silicon Valley. Much of *Microcosm* is an attempt to show, through the efforts of such pioneers as Carver Mead, a founding giant of computer-chip design, and Robert Widlar, a strange, alcoholic genius of analogue-computer miniaturization, that the logic of subatomic physics is itself a driving force behind the physical shrinkage, accelerating power, and growing decentralization that increasingly define computer development. This logic is also curiously and fortuitously aligned with the free-wheeling creative mayhem of Silicon Valley, the exact opposite of the cumbersome, centralized planning bureaucracies of IBM and other mainframe behemoths.

Others, less wedded than Gilder to technological determinism, might see the workings of analogy here. Gilder sees an ordained relationship between content (realized laws of quantum physics) and form (entrepreneurial activity). He thereby underlines at least one fact alien to advocates of economic planning and industrial strategies: that entrepreneurial activity is *real,* and effective, and that it has logical implications for the economic future.

GILDER'S argument leads him to some provocative conclusions. The loss of American economic leadership, he writes, has been overstated by those who do not understand that objects like advanced semiconductor chips have become no more than commodities in the exploding world of sophisticated computer design. With convincing force he maintains that the U.S. is in a good position in the 1990's to exploit a continuing advantage in the automation of micro-designs—so long as protectionism and managed imports do not upset the advantage. As a fervent supply-sider, Gilder believes that the U.S. trade deficit of the 1980's masked a healthy importation of capital goods (personal computers) that will power the desk-top revolution of the future. *All* planning bureaucracies, from IBM to the Soviet Union, are dead, permanently marginalized by the continuing technological breakthroughs coming from small, entrepreneurial firms. For in the computerized universe, "Rather than pushing decisions up through the hierarchy, the power of micro-electronics pulls them remorselessly down to the individual." Technology is democratic, even libertarian, in its most efficient application.

Contrary to his critics' assertions, Gilder's vehemently anti-"materialist" point of view represents not some new Tao-influenced trendiness but an older, more mainstream form of Western thought. His notion of an identity between the laws of the subatomic universe and the "overthrow of matter" are a recrudescence of neo-Platonism, of the kind made popular by another modern conservative guru of global techno-consciousness, Marshall McLuhan. And how did computer science and theology become so intertwined in the first place? The answer lies not in Eastern karma but in a Western search for religious certainty which has gone hand in hand with the growth of mathematics for more than a millennium, from Leibniz and Descartes back to St. Augustine, who declared that it was his knowledge of "numbers and places" that brought him closest to awareness of God. However debatable may be George Gilder's conclusions, his pedigree is a long and honorable one.

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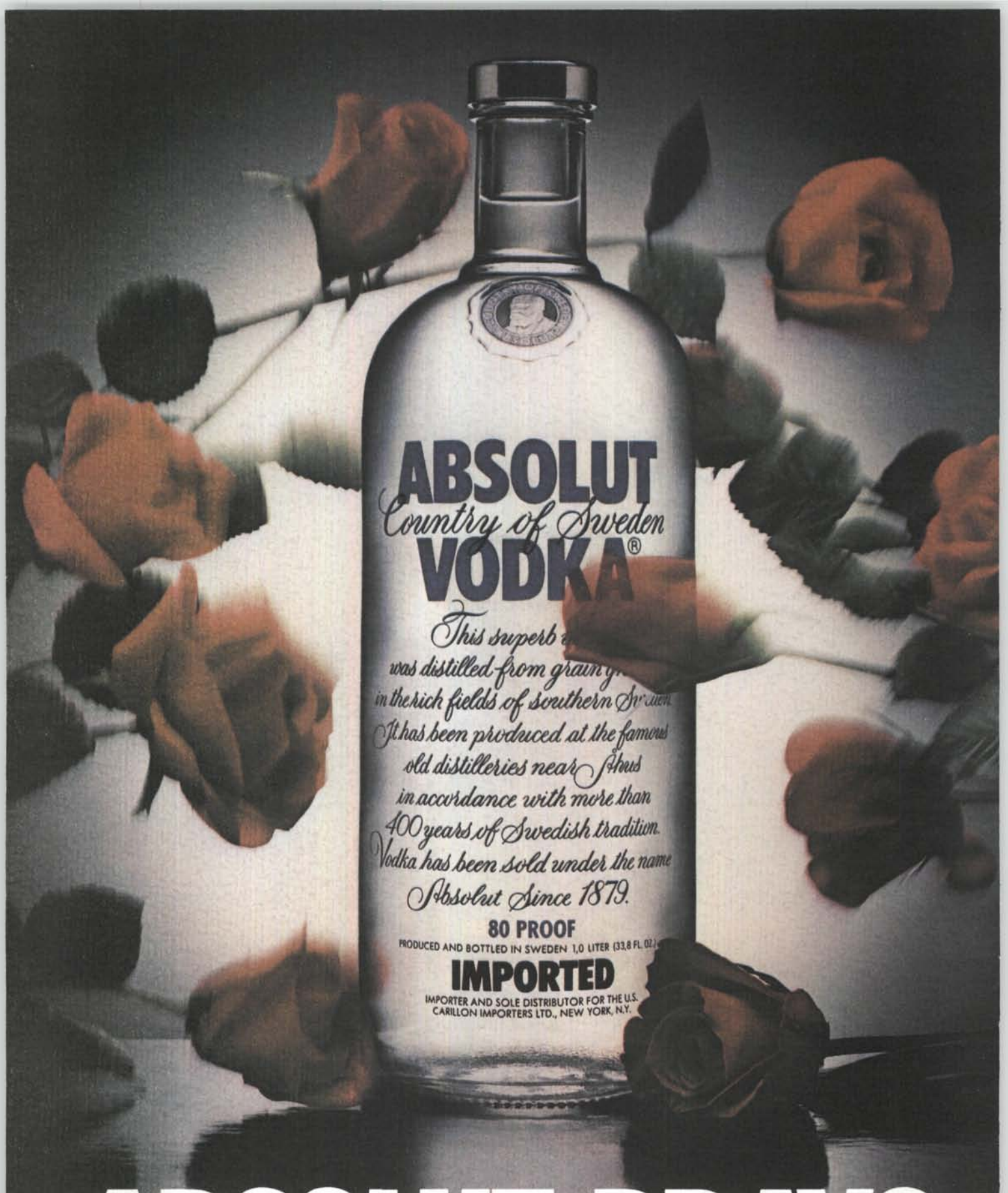
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Vodka has been sold under the name
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